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Born up a Close

Recollections and Memoirs of a Brigton boy

by

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Titles

Acknowledgments

Dedication

Listed photographs & illustrations (includes facsimiles: leaflets, journals and sundries, eg. Bridgeton Dance ticket)

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Blessed are those that expect nothing
because they won't be disappointed

Eugene Debs

Foreword

It was not without a great deal of persuasion that I decided to put my experiences into print, going back over a fifty year period in the social, industrial and political field. I am not a great writer, not even a writer at all, but it is time the voices of the footsloggers were heard rather than the generals. Like hundreds of other workers I never had the ambition nor desire to be any kind of leader. It was always exhilerating for me when the ordinary working class won even a small victory over the employing class, more so when there was an advance of democratic rights.

My philosophy has always been that the struggle to emancipate the people from the rotten and corrupt chains of the present system is greater than the personality or ambition of any leader, or any party, or indeed any government.

I have always had the greatest hatred for a system that denies there is any such thing as society, that denies responsibility for a million homeless people, that accepts no liability for millions of unemployed people; a system that discards school-leavers, forcing them onto the scrapheap without any means of support; a system that shows absolutely no concern for the health of the people, no concern that dieases such as tuberculosis are once more back on the agenda.

It is a system that practises the philosophy of greed and encourages the triumph of the powerful. Those responsible have squandered our oil and gas resources before selling them to their friends in the city. They have created private monopolies in Telecom, Gas, Water and Electricity, deprived old-age pensioners of more than £80 million by changing the method of assessment so that 11 million pensioners now have the lowest pensions in Europe.

Above all I despise the so-called Labour leaders who give credibility to a corrupt parliamentary system. This system only functions because the Loyal Opposition participates, giving the cloak of respectability to reactionary laws that have set the Labour movement back by a hundred years or more.

These are the same Houses of Parliament that legalised the plundering of a quarter of the world's territories, colonized India, Australia, Canada, the West Indies and America. They enslaved millions of African people, took them in chains to their plantations in the American continent. Ethnic cleansing did not begin with Hitler, Stalin or in the former Yugoslavia, the British aristocracy and ruling class started it more than two hundreds ago - ask the Scottish, Irish and Welsh people. Not only did they steal whole countries and continents they now stand exposed as having sent children from Britain after the 1st World War[1] to Australia, New Zealand and Canada, both to work on farms as slave labour while at the same time trying to populate these colonies with 'good white' people.

The most damning hypocrisy of all came from the various religious orders, churches and organisations who participated in enslaving whole nations. They blessed the troops before they went abroad to plunder the world, then built their churches on the captured soil. Christian organisations were further entangled in schemes to steal these young children and the deceit they used cannot be allowed to be covered up. The same organisations wonder why people have turned their backs on religion, why a variety of denominations and churches are closing down, why there is such a dearth of priests within the Roman Catholic church, why many of those who begin fail to complete their training.

After such damning exposure of religion down through the centuries one would think another way could be tried by people. What

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[1] Not the 2nd World War as has been stated elsewhere.

is wrong with the humanism of the early socialists, the syndicalists who preached cooperation rather than confrontation, those who sought truth rather than miracles. Along with religion, nationality and race have been used deliberately to divide and keep people apart.

I am a Marxist and was a member of the Communist Party for a number of years, and some reference must be made here to Russia, although I deal with the subject in more depth later. While I was educated at the various class I attended after joining the party, I was never happy about the continual worship of everything that emanated from Russia. I joined the party through struggle, because I believed its members were involved in fighting for the working class, and I had difficulty in defending aspects of Russian policy. I did not visit Russia and never had the inclination to do so. But hundreds of thousands, maybe millions, of trade union delegates and party members did do so, and returned lavishing praise on its achievments. I wonder what they have to say now? We became familiar with the following quotation of Lenin, how does it stand now in light of the collapse of the Soviet Union:

> Man's dearest possession is life, therefore you must so live as to feel no torturing regrets for years without purpose, so live that you can say all my life is dedicated to the liberation of mankind.

Part 1:

Local history, family history and boyhood recollections

Bridgeton and the Calton

Bridgeton is one of the oldest districts in Glasgow and many city institutions began there. In 1461 James Lord Hamilton bestowed a grant of property and Glasgow University was created on the site which is nowadays the disused College goods' station, right on the Bridgeton boundary. It survived the ravages of the Reformation and in later years Professor Adam Smith taught there. The rafters in the old Common Hall rang to the voices of the famous, and Lord Rectors Burke, Peel and Macaulay addressed the students. It is ironic that James Watt, inventor of the steam engine, had a workshop within its halls.

While James Watt was born in Greenock he will always be associated with Glasgow Green, one of the oldest common greens in the land. It is generally accepted that the grant by James 11 to Bishop Turnbull in 1450 was the beginning of Glasgow Green as we know it today. But there is evidence that the tract of ground known as Kinclaith was church property prior to 1116 and was used by the people as a common green. Kinclaith is opposite Monteith Row - now Weavers' Court - and reaches down to the Clyde, lying between the Doulton Fountain and the gymnasium, extending north to Charlotte Street via the People's Palace.

James Watt first visited Glasgow at the age of 13. Later he started as an apprentice spectacle-maker and set up business in the Saltmarket, selling maps and making fiddles, flutes and guitars. He did not have an ear for music although he was familiar with harmony. He could turn his

hand to anything and among other work was commissioned to build a barrel-organ for a Masonic Lodge. In 1766 he built an organ for St. Andrews Church. It was only used once, on the 23rd August 1807, when it was interdicted by the Presbytery. The invitation of Adam Smith for Watt to occupy a small building in the grounds of Glasgow University in High Street was extremely important. It was there he met Joseph Black, lecturer in chemistry. Black's discovery of the principle of latent heat could be held to have led to the breakthrough for Watt's theory of a separate condenser which resulted in the successful invention of his steam engine.

Bridgeton was an industrial district. The growth of the Colonial trade and influence of Glasgow's merchants saw the booming imports of raw materials like tobacco and cotton which, in the 18th century, led to a tremendous growth of factories and weaving mills. Apart from the district of Anderston there were more cotton mills in Brigton[1] than anywhere else in the city. Later more industries arrived, names like Beardmore's and Dixon's iron and steel manufacturers; White's chemical works, Mavor and Coulson's engineers, Sir William Arrol's bridge builders, Templeton's carpet-makers, along with leather works like Dick's balata belts, Scotia works in Boden Street etc. All within walking distance of the thousands of workers pouring into the city from the Scottish highlands and from Ireland.

The population of Glasgow rose from 42,832 in 1780 to 274,324 in 1841, a large proportion of whom were Irish refugees escaping from the Famine. It was reported that of the 1.000 destitute people sleeping on the streets 30% were Irish. The Irish population in the Calton in 1819 was 21.73% and in Bridgeton 12.1%. People from other parts of Scotland amounted to 54.84% of the Calton population and 40.59% in Bridgeton. The living conditions of the people in the city's east end were described

1 Common for Bridgeton in Glasgow.

in the following terms:

> I have seen human degradation in some of its worst phases both in England and abroad, but I can advisedly say that I did not believe, until I visited the wynds of Glasgow, that so large an amount of filth, crime, misery and disease existed on one spot in any civilised country.

The Gallowgate was first mentioned in 1325 and in 1544 the Battle of the Butts took place on the ground occupied by the old Barracks and the Cattle Market to the north of the Calton. The Earls Lennox and Glencairn, supported by the townsmen, fought against the Earl of Arran's army. Three hundred were killed on either side (?) and sixteen leading citizens were hanged afterwards. At the battle of Vittria in 1813, during the Indian campaign, Colonel Cadogan led the H.L.I. regiment (the Highland Light Infantry) with the cry: "Come on lads, charge them down the Gallowgate."

As early as 1175 King William the Lion opened a market at the Glasgow Cross end of Gallowgate, and another later on the old Glasgow Green, between Saltmarket and Stockwell bridges. A painting of the fair held there by Wm. Walton could be seen in the Banqueting Hall in the City Chambers.

The Calton (which means Hazel-grove) is one of the oldest districts in Glasgow and was first named in 1722. Its original name was Blackfaulds. Until the Glasgow Eastern Development moved in around 1977 there was a small street of that name facing Abercromby Street, it ran into Canning Street.[2] Although small this was one of the busiest streets in the Calton, housing the premises of Dunn & Moore, the soft drinks manufacturer.

The lands of Blackfaulds were owned by the church until annexed by the crown in 1587, passing through several hands before reaching John Walkinshaw, a Renfrewshire laird. Walkinshaw's daughter was the

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2 Nowadays London Road

famous Clementina, mistress of Bonnie Prince Charlie and she went to France in 1745. His grandfather(?) was imprisoned during the 1715 rising.

There was a Calton Loch adjacent to Hunter Street and the rear of the old Glasgow University. Hayracks were seen in the Trongate in 1795 and as late as 1890 pigs wandered Tontine Close. The boundaries of the Calton village were indefinite but in 1817 George 111 granted a charter to Esther and Martha Ray, and Robert and William Pollock, creating the Calton into a Barony, but not of Regality. In 1819 Mile End was annexed to the Calton by an Act of Parliament, then in 1846 the Calton was itself annexed to Glasgow.

There had been four Provosts during the time; Robert Struthers, a Calton brewer; Nathaniel Stevenson who held office for 21 years; and Robert Bartholemew and Robert Bankier were the others. The Burgh Buildings stood at the corner of Struthers Street and Stevenson Street. The Provost's House, a substantial two storey building, was situated in James Street. Later it became a stable and it stood until 1930, when it was burned down. I was there the night it happened and will never forget the screams of the poor horses trapped in the blaze.

In the late 18th century the Calton was a village of weavers and when the mill-owners introduced a massive wage-cut which, in some cases, meant pay was halved, there were strikes and demonstrations. On the order of Provost Liddell troops were called out under the command of a Colonel Kellet. The Riot Act was read and the soldiers opened fire, killing six weavers and seriously wounding twenty; dozens of others were injured.

No history of the Calton could ever be written without reference to this. It was one of the most vile acts against workers in a long history of foul deeds. The weavers' only crime was to defend themselves against the wage-cuts carried out by the mill-owners. In 1787 they marched

down Barrack Street in an orderly procession to demonstrate their opposition, only to be met by the military.

Three of the dead were buried in the old Calton cemetry in Abercromby Street. Provost Liddell was a prominent merchant of the day and his uncle was John Glassford of Douglaston, probably the most famous merchant in the city. After Colonel Kellet's brave act of shooting into a crowd of unarmed workers Provost Liddell deemed it appropriate to give him the Freedom of the City of Glasgow, and he granted all the troops a toddy and a free pair of boots and stockings.

The Calton Weavers have become legends in the trade union movement for laying down their lives for a basic human right. Memorial stones were erected in the old Calton cemetry. They have been renovated and renewed down through the years by the *Glasgow Trades Council* and the *Friends of the People's Palace.*

This brave movement of weavers and other workers led to one weaver by the name of Andrew McKinlay being arrested in 1817 and charged with treason. His trial in Edinburgh came to an abrupt end when it was seen to be a conspiracy led by spies of the state. The demand for political reform was taking shape in 1793. Thomas Muir, Advocate of Huntershill and born in the High Street, was tried for sedition then transported to Botany Bay. The Rising of 1820 was a real threat to the state authorities and the weavers played a central part in that.

The biggest social problem in Glasgow has been bad housing. For a period of more than a hundred years successive local councils and governments not only failed to solve it, they made no attempt to tackle it. The only politician of any stature was John Wheatley, MP for Shettleston. He succeeded in getting basic housing legislation through the House of Commons which allowed local authorities to address the problem.

At one time if you walked from Glasgow Cross along the southside of the Gallowgate beyond Moir Street you would have come to several large openings in the grey sandstone tenements. These were called 'pens'. At the back of them you would have seen as many as four closes leading to three landings, with six or four doors on each. In one particular pen - locals called it the 'Pudding Pen' - at least a hundred people resided, including children and pensioners. It happened a lot. Tenements were built directly in front of the older buildings, they became known as 'back loans'.

Hundreds of them abounded in Brigton and Calton. Most of the ground floors were single-ends and the people had to burn light night and day because no daylight, let alone sunlight, ever came through any windows. Their backcourts were very small. In a whole number of cases the middens were pressed right up against the ground floor windows and there were all kinds of vermin, the houses were rat-infested.

Despite the efforts of the tenants the insides of these hovels were horrific. Some of the single-ends hardly measured 8 ft by 4 ft. They had set-in beds which in some cases slept two adults and four children. Some set-in beds had a door that could be shut. In 1818 typhus fever raged unchecked for a year and raised the death-rate for the city 42% higher than the average for the previous five years. Cholera first appeared in Glasgow in 1832. The virulence of the disease terrified people. In the Albion Street cholera hospital 79% of all victims died and three thousand people died between February and November. In the whole of the city south of the river there was only one doctor, and none at all in either Brigton or the Calton. In his report on the children whose deaths were so numerous, Dr. J. B. Russell, Glasgow's Medical Officer of Health at that time, stated:

> Their little bodies were laid on a table or a dresser so as to be somewhat out of the way of their brothers and sisters who play and sleep and eat in their ghastly company. From beginning to rapid-

ending the lives of these children are short. 0ne in every five of those who are born there never see the end of their first year.

The most important pastime for a large section of the working class was social drinking in public houses. This was as true in Brigton or Calton as it was elsewhere. According to G. B. Wilson[3] the average consumption of spirits in 1830 - 1839 was 2.55 proof gallons per head of population per year. Considering the terrible housing conditions - the worst in Europe - it is not too surprising that drink might have been seen as an escape.

It is also true that Brigton and the Calton had the largest number of public houses in Glasgow so the people would not have had to travel far for a drink. In most streets but, particularly the main roads, there was said to be a pub at every lamp-post. There was definitely one at nearly every corner. My father told me that between Glasgow Cross and Parkhead Cross there were at least 115 pubs. There were five in my own street alone which was only about 900 yards long; less than 20 yards away London Road had another ten. And of course it was never difficult to find a drink in any of the tens of dozens of shebeens in the district.

It may seem a contradiction to some but the growth of the Chartist movement in the Glasgow of 1838 also saw a growth in awareness of the evils of alcohol. 0n Monday 21st May there was a Chartist demonstration in Glasgow Green which drew a crowd of 200,000. 70 trades unions marched in the procession. All public works were stopped. 0ne newspaper sympathetic to the Chartists said that if Parliament refused to hearken to the to the call of the unenfrachised then the people would "abstain from all liquor and tobacco and thus cripple Government revenue".

Alongside this agitation grew a strong temperance movement. Temperance hotels began and the Chartist leader Robert Cranston began

[3] Quoted by T. C. Smout in his *A Century of the Scottish People 1830 - 1950.*

the temperance tea-rooms which lasted over a hundred years. Most of the religions played a part, except the Roman Catholic Church which remained aloof. There were individual exceptions. One Catholic priest, Father Theobald Matthews was a passionate supporter of the temperance cause and in 1842 he addressed 30,000 people in Glasgow Green. While the non-catholic churches led the temperance movement in Scotland the skilled craftsmen, in their trade unions, played a large part among the working class.

There were Chartist shops and Chartist churches and hundreds of demonstrations and working class people were hearing alternative voices. One of the greatest was Bronterro O'Brien who spoke to an assembly of 10,000 at Monkton Moor in Fifeshire where he said

> If God sent the rich people into the world with combs in their head like fighting cocks, if he sent the poor people into the world with humps on their backs like (?)

family history and early memories

I was born after the first World War into a family of two girls and two boys. My father was a railway worker employed by Wordie Ltd., a subsidiary of the L.M.S., the London Midland & Scottish Railways. He was a carter to begin with but later on he became a checker in the goods' yard at the old Buchanan Street Station. He was a staunch Roman Catholic, attending Sacred Heart chapel every Sunday. My mother had been a cotton weaver in a few mills in the east end of Glasgow. When I arrived she worked in Wilson's, alongside her sister Jean who died when I was quite young. My sister Peggy worked there too. The mill was around the corner from our house in Bernard Street. It was owned by the Shaw family who acquired a great deal of fame through one of their sons, G. D. Wilson, one of the greatest rugby players seen in Scotland.

My paternal grandparents originally came from Northern Ireland, among the thousands that flocked to Scotland to escape from the potato blight in the early 1900s. But they seemed to prosper in Glasgow and had a small fish and chip shop in the region of French Street. This was before I was born. I never met them and had no recollection of them. My father was the eldest son, he had two brothers and two sisters. His brother James lived in Canning Street, which has now become London Road. They were not close but we did get visits from James's two sons. He also had at least one daughter. She was engaged to be married to Georgie Geddes Junior, son of the famous Georgie Geddes who founded the Humane Society, responsible for rescuing people in difficulty both in the River Clyde and other waters in and around Glasgow.

This became one of the worst tragedies in Glasgow. Apparently a woman had tried to drown herself by jumping from the suspension bridge in the Glasgow Green. Young George managed to get a hold of her from the boat but she was quite a heavy woman and they were drifting near the wear gates. He jumped into the water to try to lift her in but she immediately grabbed hold of him around the neck and despite being a champion swimmer she pulled him under. They were sucked towards the wear and both were drowned. Despite that old Georgie Geddes carried on with the rescue service well into his eighties.

We did visit my father's two sisters in Riddrie, my aunts Agnes and Mary who was the oldest and a supervisor in Strang's mill in Greenhead Street. She was a very sweet lady and unlike the rest of the family regularly visited our house in Bernard Street. I faintly remember visiting my Uncle Hugh's house in Riddrie. Although I was named after him, and all our family went to Sacred Heart school in Bridgeton where he was a teacher - my sisters Peggy and Elizabeth were in his class - he never acknowledged our presence.

Many years later when my father died, the night his body was

being taken to the Chapel, Uncle Hugh waited at the bottom of the close. He never did enter our house. Yet if the older members of his family had not taken ordinary jobs to supplement the family income my grandparents could not have afforded the fees to put him through University,

However I most certainly remember my Granny Scott, my mother's mum who lived further along Bernard Street. She had been widowed very young. My grandfather was called Walter Scott, he was the chief superintendent at the Philadelphia gas works in America. Their son - my uncle Andrew - was only a baby when Walter was killed outright by an explosion. As far as I know my gran had been planning to go out and join my grandfather in the U.S.A. It must have been a terrible shock for her, a young woman widowed with three children. But she did not sit back feeling sorry for herself. There is no doubt she received generous compensation because in no time she opened up three or four 'oil and colour' shops in the Calton and Mile-End.

This type of shop was a necessity in Glasgow in those days, selling candles, gas-mantles, paraffin and fire-lighters. Most of the tenements were gas lit, perhaps with the occasional paraffin lamp. My grannie prospered for many years but when I came along she had remarried and all the shops had gone. My step-grandfather was called McDairmid. He had been the coachman to the Caldwells, the family who owned the famous Scotia leatherworks in Boden Street, Bridgeton.

Up till recently if you were going down Dunn Street you could see the large water steel tank still standing with the name Scotia emblazoned on it. According to my mother when Granda McDairmid was dressed in his livery and driving the Caldwell coach with its pair of grey horses he was a handsome sight. He was a very tall man and must have cut a dashing figure. Then of course it must have been very obvious that my grandmother - a young quite well-off widow - was regarded as a

good catch. However when I remember him he was retired and worked as the watchman in the Scotia works. I used to go along with him to keep the boilers going and feed the Airdale watchdog that I played with. I had the time of my life wandering through the empty works and offices followed by the large dog.

Grannie Scott was one of the most capable and able woman I ever met. Even although I was quite young I knew she feared no one, despite her size. Not that she was physical in any way but her commanding voice and capable manner made people twice her size shrivel. Also she had developed a cancer on her forehead and in those days she had to travel by tramcar to the Royal Infirmary twice a week to have it burned without any pain killers. My mother used to come home crying yet my grannie never said a word. She kept an immaculate house with two horse-hair rocking chairs that I used to play on although because of my short trousers my bare legs got jagged whenever I slid on or off them.

The real attraction, as I got older, was using her stairhead toilet. This was my pride and joy, my reading room. There was only two houses on her landing and only three people used it so it was scrupulously clean and you had all the time in the world to do your business - which for me meant being able to read at the same time.

I used to buy my favourite comics and make a beeline for my granny's carsy. If it was dark I borrowed a wee candle with a match and I read in peace and solitude. Until one night I heard footsteps halt outside. I had retired with my Rover comic, a candle and a box of matches, I was settled back to enjoy the exploits of Morgyn the Mighty. I was ready to chap the door and say there was someone using it when they seemed to lean against it. I immediately doused the candle then horror stricken I heard two voices. It was the lassie upstairs with her boyfriend. I waited in silence, afraid to breathe or pull up my trousers. After a few minutes I knew I could not declare my presence, it was

going to be a serious winching session. I looked around to see if I could squeeze out the wee window but as it was one stair up it would very difficult and probably quite dangerous so I waited in silence. Then my granny came to the rescue, she opened her door and shouted "Hughie! hurry up out of that lavvy!" And to my relief I heard the lassie saying a hurried goodnight and running up the stairs. I was out that toilet and diving into my grannie's faster than the favourite at Shawfield could get out its trap. After that I always kept looking away whenever I passed that lassie.

My grannie's cancer got worse and she eventually died. I cannot recall a great deal about her actual death but I can remember her funeral. She was buried in Sandymount cemetery and I went regularly with my mother on a Sunday to put flowers on her grave. I also know that she made my mother promise to take in Peggy Park. Peggy had stayed with my granny after my Auntie Jean had died and her father had emigrated to Canada. So despite the terrible pain and agony my grannie made certain that my cousin was sure of a home when she died.

So the house at 118 Bernard Street became quite crowded with three boys and now three girls. Unfortunately my mother was dealt a terrible blow when my sister Lizzie died when she was only 13. My mother never recovered from this. Despite the fact it was diagnosed as meningitis my mother always felt it came because Lizzie had got a fright from the man next door that she never got over. I was just a wee boy and cannot remember much about that period but despite the cramped house it was a happy house most of the time, with plenty of people comming and going.

The week-ends were very cheery. On Saturdays my mother's brother, my Uncle Andrew, came down from Germiston. He walked all the way down and back again. While we were not wealthy there was always plenty of good home-made soup, with stew or mince and tatties

or stoveis. My uncle Andrew had not worked for years so my mother used to give him a shilling for a wee punt with the bookie that lifted the lines in our close. He really was a good laugh. He used to bet 3 pence doubles and trebles. We always said if his line came up the bookie would have to do a runner as he would not have enough cash to pay out. My Uncle Andrew was really a poor soul but he was so nice and warm he lit up the entire household.

Then of course we had always a great night on Sunday. When the tea was finished there was a domino school with all of us in the game, including a distant relation of my mother's. We called him Uncle Davy - Davie Fairley - and he was a top cabinet maker, an artist. He made beautiful, hand-carved mahogany tea-trays and any kind of furniture. He was a modest and quiet man and he loved his game of dominoes every Sunday night. And although the stakes were only coppers he had a good laugh when he put down his last domino to win the pot and he always shouted "dominoe for Dovid". We did not have a wireless in those days, we made our own entertainment.

Our house was only a room and kitchen with an outside toilet. There were seven of us living in the place. Even so there were hundreds of people worse off than us, living in much more overcrowded conditions. When you are young it does not seem to matter though, I never felt disadvantaged. It was a very happy home. Before James, my older brother, got married there were four wage-earners in the family. This made us better off financially than most of our neighbours. Of course my father's pay was £1-12-0 per week and my mother's was 15/-; my sister Peggy earned only 10/- and James got 12/-, so it was not exactly a fortune.

There were two busy co-operative societies, the Glasgow Eastern and the London Road. They played a very important role in the social fabric of those days. As well as providing everything from dairy

produce to clothes and furtniture the dividend they paid was large enough to buy school clothing and a helkp to save for holidays and the New Year. Also it is important to stress the role they played in the organisation of day-trips to the coast for children. They always had choirs for males and females and they were usually available for weddings and socials. When the May-Day parades came around you could be assured that the largest and most colourful secion would be the Cooperative Society with dozens of of decorated lorries. Children would be seated inside and they would be drawn by magnificent Clydesdales that were owned by every Cooperative Society, and leading many of the contingents would be their massed bands.

Another aspect of the cooperative was the dividend they paid on your purchases, it was paid on a quarterly basis and if you left it lying it came in handy either for your Christmas or even your holidays if you could afford them.We were quite fortunate in that regard as my father worked in the railways at Buchanan Street goods station he could get passes for his family every year so for over thirteen years we went to the granite city of Aberdeen and the coop dividend made a major contribution to our expenses.It also helped to purchase clothes out of what they called the drapery department. None of this would have been possible if it had not been for my mother who as well as bringing up a family of seven which included my cousin Peggy Park the second daughter of my auntie Jean who worked in Wilson's cotton mill along with my mother, she died quite young and my mother promised my granny Scott that she would be brought up as one of her own.

One thing is for certain, we could never have managed without my mother. She worked from 8 a.m. in the morning till nearly 6 p.m. On Saturdays she finished at 12 noon and went straight to the steamie, the washhouse at Ruby Street. She booked for two hours and we pulled a large wicket basket on wheels down and then when her turn was up we

pulled the clean clothes back to Bernard Street where they were hung out in the backcourt, weather permitting. After that they would be taken up to the house for ironing.

She was also a good baker and could make shortbread and a Clootie Dumplin for a few pennies. She made large pots of broth with a nat(?) or hambone from the butcher plus a penny's worth of vegetables. For tenpence she could make stovies and tatties for ten people. We used to go to what was called the 'shan shop'. This was opened by McFarlane Lang the bakers to sell off their mishaped loafs, buns and cakes - the ones that did not come up standards - at reduced prices. We carried them home in a big pillow case.

None of the boys ever wore a pair of trousers bought out a shop. My mother used to buy good-sized remnants from a small Jewish tailor in Saltmarket who gave her quality material cheap. The only snag was the Singer sewing machine she had to use. She could not manage the intricate sewing on the front of the short trousers, so she created what she called a 'bobbie patch' so a wee boy like myself could answer the call of nature.

My father was a very dour man. I can never recall having a conversation with him. He never read anything of substance, but then he was no different from most people in his period, your only pastimes were the pub and a wee bit gambling on the horses. His wages in those days was £1-12-0 a week when he worked with the L.M.S. railways so there was not much to go around. Then again you could get a pint of beer for a penny and a quarter gill of whisky for thruppence, and twenty woodbine cigarettes for thruppence so I suppose everything is comparative. In most things I feel my father had an inferiority complex.

While he was quite a dour man he was not afraid of any of the so-called hard-men in the district. I remember my mother telling me of an incident that happened when we were all very young. There was a Mrs

Murdoch who lived in the wee single end in the close, she came to our door which was on the third floor and battered on it quite loud shouting "Hurry up Mrs Savage, wee Boyle is going roon the Booly[4] to fight your man and he'll get murdered." My mother opened the door and said "If my man is daft enough to fight let him get murdered, that's his problem" and she shut the door. Old Mrs Murdoch who was fond of a drink leaned against the wall and shouted "Whit kind of wummin are you who's no worried about yer man."

Apparently what happened in Flynn's pub was wee Boyle who had a bit of a reputation as a fighting man demanded that my faither buy him a drink he was told to get lost or words to that affect so the chellenge was issued and accepted, The whole pub more or less emptied and made their way to Booly for a square go. My faither finished his pint then followed them. Wee Boyle lead the crowd but as he passed a group of men standing at the corner of Dunn Street and Bernard Street he spoke to a well-known fighting man called Willie Lamont. He said "Are you coming roond the Booly to see me giving Savage a doing?" Willie Lamont looked at him and said "Ah widny bet on it".

When they reached the Booly wee Boyle stripped to the waist and started sparring around, practising. My faither who by this time had arrived, finished his fag and stepped into the centre of the man-made ring. As Boyle approached him he pulled the skip of his bonnet to the back of his head then grabbed Boyle's arm and butted him right on the nose with his head. He continued to do that with Boyle's nose spurting blood and the crowd booing until Boyle slumped to the ground. My faither made an attempt to give Boyle a hand up but Boyle's supporters pushed him away shouting "Savage by name and Savage by nature". Apparently when my faither came home he washed his hands took his tea and went to bed without saying a word, he never spoke about

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[4] see page

anything that hapened outside the house.

It was always a packed house. My mother must have been the Mother Teresa of those days as she never turned anyone away. She took pity on one of my father's workmates who worked as a carter with the same firm of railway contractors. The man had no family in Glasgow and he lost his digs so my mother fitted him in. Then of course when her step-sister, my Auntie Nellie, had to run out in the middle of the night from her husband, she had to take her in as well. The woman was escaping a beating when her man came home drunk.

My Aunt Nellie was a tall lady and very good-looking when she was young. She was one of the first lady conductors on the Glasgow Trams, and she had been a skilled shoemaker in Galleries' factory in Dalmarnock Road. She had also a nice soprano voice. She could have had her choice of young men. One of the boys that she went with was called Kenny Campbell. As far as I know he played for Dundee United and was capped for Scotland. However, Auntie Nellie had married a plumber called Walker and a sore face was a regular occurence when he came home drunk at the weekends. My mother used to tell her she did not have to take it because she had no family to hold her back.

But Auntie Nellie was not alone. When I was a baby my mother had the same problem when my own father came home drunk. Apparently she had to take all us kids downstairs to a nice woman called Mrs Elborn on a Saturday night when he was out drinking. We all waited there until after the pub doors closed and he had came home and went to bed.

One night he found out we were taking refuge downstairs in Mrs Elborn's house so he came up the stairs and burst open her door and confronted all of us. I was in my mother's arms and as he made to grab her my brother James, who was only sixteen, stepped forward. James was an apprentice joiner and had taken up a wee bit boxing, he was

very well-built. He said to my father "No, I've watched you hitting my mother for years and you've hit her for the last time." My father moved to hit James but James hit him first and he fell to the floor. James pulled him outside and sat him on the stairs. Most of the family went back up to the house. But Mrs Elborn made my mother a cup of tea and when the girls came to take their mother up the stairs they said their dad was still sitting on the stairs, crying "My boy hit me." But it is a fact that that was the last time my dad ever raised his hand to my mother.

employment and the unemployed

Most workers were within walking distance of a job in Brigton. Sir William Arrol's steel and bridge building works (?) right in Bernard Street, there was a branch of Templeton's carpet works, leather works like Martin's and several cotton mills including Wilsons where my mother was a weaver along with my sister Peggy. I knew the inside of Wilson's very well as I had my dinner in it every day. My mother had it laid out for us alongside her loom. Then after I had to rush back to school. Of course there was many famous mills including Anderson's shirt mill which became Hollins, manufacturers of the famous and expensive Vyella shirt.

The first motor car in Scotland, 'the Argyle', was built in Bridgeton at a factory located at the corner of Baltic Street and John Street. Later on the same site Singers began their first sewing machine factory before moving onto Clydebank. There was also the Acme wringer works in Fielden Street on the north side of London Road. Their products were a boon to those woman who could afford to buy one. A large number of backcourts had uncovered middens and in the summertime, because of the lochs of human excrement, many tenants could not even into the backcourts. This meant the women could not hang their washing out to

dry. The Acme wringer meant their cloths would be dry enough to hang up in the pulley inside the kitchen.

Further along London Road in Fordneuk Street was Claude Alexander the tailor. It was some name for Brigton but he had many shops throughout Glasgow.

Going towards Celtic Park two streets before Kerrydale Street there was McPhee's sawmills. Across the London Road on the southside you had Connell's ginger works. The next street you had one of the largest haulage contractors in the business, Gavin Wilkie's. They hauled all the tubes from Stewart & Loyds in Rutherglen to all the shipyards, also to the other tube works in Tollcross and as far as Coatbridge, all horse-drawn. It was some sight to see four big horses in pairs, Clydesdales, pulling tons of tubes miles in a day all over the west of Scotland. As wee boys we used to sit outside the stables in Boden Street waiting for the horses to come back in the evening.

There is no doubt that Brigton was one of the city's key industrial districts. Yet at nearly every street corner where I stayed there were dozens of unemployed men and boys. Hardly one of them had a suit on his back; they wore odd jackets and trousers. In most cases they wore hand-me-downs, clothes passed from one person to another. There were no dry cleaners in those days, and no money to use them if there had been. Unemployment was particularly bad among the young men over twenty. Many had to leave their homes due to the imposition of the 'means-test'. The local parish officers calculated the total income from the parish and if it was over a certain figure, just like today, then any single person's benefit would be stopped, and that person would have to leave home. While hundreds went abroad, many more had to join work schemes. Thousands could be seen hanging about the street corners. You could tell them because they were sorely clad. Many of them did not even own a suit, and if they did it was in the pawnshop. They wore odd

trousers and jackets, mostly torn or stained.

I remember one of the above unemployed, he had been idle for over two years and then got a job in Martin's leather works which was situated at the end of our street. Within a few weeks he had saved enough money to purchase a complete new suit. Unfortunately his pal, big Andy, was knocked-back for a job. However, in better times they had exchanged suits, as they were more or less the same build. The purpose of this caper was to creat the impression that they had an extensive wardrobe or as they said in those days, to show they were 'well geared-up'. During this period a few of the dance halls like the Locarno ran matinee sessions and it only cost 3d or 4d to get in. So big Andy got into the habit of going up to his pal's house and taking a loan of the suit to go to the Locarno and returning it before his pal came home from work.

I dont know the outcome of that story but I do know that long-term unemployment is degrading and should play no part in a civilised society. It is remarkable, when you look back, at every street corner from morning till night groups of unemployed men of all ages spent their time hanging about in a district teeming with works and factories. Most of these world-famous firms paid starvation wages and wo betide any of their workers who happened to mention unions. Another feature of the employment policy of firms such as Templeton's, Sir Wm. Arrol's and others was the strict veto on catholics. This was never admitted and concealed by asking school-leavers which school they attended. In the case of adults they checked their record and religion by contacting their previous employers. The number of firms that did not employ a religious-bar was so small that by naming his previous place of work the applicant provided the necessary information. I wonder how the owners of Strang's cotton mills in Greenhead Street would have reacted if they had known that the well-spoken woman who spent some time

with the weavers, taking sketches of them at their looms, was Sylvia Pankhurst and that the senior tenor in their mill was the brother of the famous suffragette - or infamous, depending on your point of view.

Housing and living conditions

In the 1930s Glasgow was known as the second city of the British Empire and the sixth city of Europe. But to wee boys playing about the streets it was made up in places like Brigton of thousands of grey tenements with the occasional red sandstone tenement. These buildings consisted of three stories with three houses in each landing, with an earthenware w. c. on the half-landing providing one toilet for all the occupants of the three houses in that particular landing. In a tenement close like the one our family stayed in at 118 Bernard Street probably twenty two people including children used that one bog. In the twenty odd years I lived there the w.c. was never renewed and nor was it ever painted. Neither was the close.

The above example was not the worst. There was some closes in streets like Nuneaton Street and many many others where there were six doors on each landing and as many as thirty or forty using the same 'toilet facilities'.

Bernard Street was about 900 yards long, running parallel with London Road. There were five public houses in the street itself with another ten in adjacent streets. In those days the publicans did not cater for women. A pub consisted of a public bar and a 'family department' which catered for anyone wishing a carry-out of liquor.

Outside the ground floor windows and at the mouth of most of the closes groups of women congregated. None of them wore coats, they all wore shawls of various colours and sizes. In most cases they were carrying weans. You could look along the whole of Bernard Street and

never see a pram. The women carried their children everywhere in a shawl. They just had to get out of the houses. No wireless, no washing-up facilities except the kitchen sink, their places of abode had no furniture other than several beds, a coal bunker and a large kitchen table where the whole family dined. There was hardly a place to sit and it was lit by gas which made the atmosphere very stuffy. The women stood at the close and the corner till well after 10 p.m.

I remember a pal of mine, when we were talking about the above, he told me a story about a crowd of women that used to stand outside a close in Arcadia Street. One of the women who had been married very young still carried her wee boy in the shawl, right up till he was over four years of age. It so happened the young mother had a full vocabulary of the more colourful language. One evening she was standing at the close and her wee boy got tired and fell asleep, and he slumped deeper into the shawl. She kept adjusting it by opening the shawl and changing his position till eventually the wean woke up and shouted "Shut the fucking shawl, there's a draught!"

You can sometimes forget that in the midst of all this deprivation and poverty not only had people a sense of humour and humanity, they had a real community. There were no social services or social workers as such, you had a health visitor or 'green lady', as she was called. Most babies were born at home. The death-rate was horrific but it would have been much higher if it had not been for the midwives who delivered a large number of these children. One such person who has never received a mention in all the records of Brigton was Nurse Mulholland. She lived all her life in Greenhead Street facing the Glasgow Green. She must have delivered thousands of babies.

One house was occupied by a very kind woman called Mrs Kerr. She was a clean wee soul, always running back and forward to the steamie, the only source available in most of the tenements for the

people to wash their clothes. The factors who looked after the houses had allowed the backcourt washhouses to fall into such a state of disrepair that either they fell down or had to be demolished. When they did fall down they could severely injure the children because the backcourt was their playground. I can recall on one occasion a wee fair haired boy getting crushed to death when the rotten old bricks built with lime collapsed, and the solid concrete roof of the wash-house fell in on him. He came from Dunn Street from a nice family and they never got over their unnessary loss.

In school you were shown maps of the world coloured in red sections indicating the countries that formed the Empire. You were never told that the natives of these lands had been disposessed and then enslaved by their captors, the British ruling class. This was only one of thousands of facts and truths that you were not told as you made your progress through school. In Brigton it was not just street after street of smoke-grimed grey sandstone tenements, there was the occasional red sandstone where we thought the toffs lived.

The rents of our houses went to a house factor called R. Metcalf who had at least three offices in the district where you paid in at least once a month. I learned many years later that the actual owners of these tenements lived abroad, some as far away as the Argentine. In other tenements in Brigton, like in Baltic Street and Nuneaton Street, and in some of the 'back-loons' of London Road, as many as six families on each landing shared the same toilet.

It was quite a regular occurrence, particularly in the summer, to have large puddles of waste water flooding the back courts, with human excrement floating on the surface. It was so bad that tenants could not get access to the 'middens' to deposit their ashes, or walk out to the backcourts to hang up the family washings, especially if it happened at week-ends and a plumber was not available.

The most serious consequence of the above was, if the drain remained choked the big puddles were an attraction for children, even although they were afloat with sewage and human waste. The backcourt was the only place the weans could play so who would be surprised if an outbreak of contagious diseases like disentry did tke place. If they stood on a piece of glass when wading with their bare feet you could be sure that the cut would fester if not immediately sterilised. It is to the credit of the ordinary people of places like Brigton that if Iodine Tincture or Boracic Lint was not available, then the good old carbolic soap with a bread poultice was used as the final standby.

The hundreds of old buildings that stood in the backcourts as the remains of long-gone houses, workshops and derelict wash-houses provided active boys like me with good dykes to play on, doing what we called 'the jumps'; that is, jumping or leaping from one dyke to another. We graduated from wee jumps of maybe three or four feet to some as long as six, seven or even eight feet. It could be dangerous as it was a long fall to the ground. The dykes stood as high as eight feet and the landing might be onto tarmac or concrete but it was usually a kind of contest and most boys took the risk.

the church and recreation

There were two churches in the street and both were very well known, one of them was St Francis in the East, it provided a great deal of help to the unemployed by providing some basic training on things like assembling radios for the men, and sewing and cooking classes for the woman. My mother who was a weaver became a member of their sodality classes, but the place was known as the Pal's club and I think was quite similar to what the late Rev. George McLeod carried out in Govan.

In most working class districts were the soirees run by some of

the evangelical churches. These consisted of a religious service, the singing of hymns, a bag of cakes and cups of tea, and then a sermon was usually conducted by a well-known evangelist.

The famous Seth Sykes and his wife regularly came. They went all over the country, and abroad, singing and preaching. When they appeared in the Bethany Hall in Bernard Street the main hall - which held nearly a thousand people - was full to capacity. When the tea-meeting ended about 9 p.m. there was an army of small boys standing outside the main entrance. They would be asking the congregation, mainly women, if they "had any bags?" The women all received a bag each when they went into the meetings, with at least four or five cakes ,and most of them only managed to eat one or two of them. In many cases they took pity on the children, most of them poorly clad, and gave them their bags. I was always partial to cakes myself and I joined the chorus asking "Have yeany bags missus?" till one night my mother saw me and that was the end of my begging.

It was also a weekly event for twenty or more of the regular congregation of churches and mission halls to march from their premises to the nearest main road junction. The Bethany Hall people marched to the corner of Dunn Street and London Road, singing hymns accompanied by musical instruments like a concertina or an accordion. When they reached the corner they carried out a prayer meeting with several speakers, men and woman, telling people who were standing or passing by how they had found the glory of God. They sung hymns and appealed for people to come forward and join their church, then they put round a small velvet bag asking for a financial contribution.

This was repeated throughout Brigton and the whole of Glasgow by hundreds of religous missions and evangelical groups. There were larger organisations like the Salvation Army who had a twenty piece brass band that performed at Bridgeton Cross every Sunday night.

Sometimes they went all over the east end playing and collecting. There was another uniformed group from Moncur Street in the Calton who had a brass band and did the same as the Salvation Army, playing through out the district. They also had a medical centre in their premises where they adminstered medical help.

So in different ways Brigton, despite the ginding poverty, had a vibrant community.

The main form of entertainment was the pictures. 'Talking pictures' had just been introduced and the very first one to come to Glasgow was *The Singing Fool* with Al Jolson as its star. It first appeared in the Coliseum, Eglinton Street on the south side of the city. I was too young to remember, but it caused a sensation. As I got older 'talking pictures' came to most cinemas and so they mushroomed all over Glasgow. Many music halls changed to showing films. Some like the King's in James Street and the Olympia at Bridgeton Cross did both on the one programme, putting on a variety-turn in between the two pictures.

I remember as a wee boy being in the King's and to the delight of the audience the one and only Victor McLaglan was introduced on the stage. There was uproar. On his way out after he went up the centre passage and as I was on the outside seat next to the passage I reached out and touched his beautiful camel hair coat. He towered above everybody and must have been over 6' 4". He had a big grin over his face and I felt so good to know that for the first and probably the last time in my life I touched a real film star. I learned later that when he left that night he was on his way to Shawfield Stadium to see the world championship fight between Benny Lynch and Peter Kane.

Along with the King's and the Olympia there was the Royal, the Arcadia, the Star, the Strathclyde, the Plaza and the Premier which some people called the 'Geggy'. The area was saturated with picture-houses

and if you cared to travel a few hundred yards to Dennistoun there were four there, or else to Parkhead where there were another three and so on.

This onslaught killed variety in most districts stone-dead although theatres like the Princess in the Gorbals and the Scotia in Watson Street still carried on, along with the Metrepole and the Pavilion and quite a few others. Although it must be said that the closing of the Glasgow Empire was really the beginning of the taking-over of the city centre by the property speculators and it was nothing at all to do with the growth of the cinema.

gambling and workers' casinos

But Brigton was really a hive of activity in the thirties. Two other aspects of social life, particularly for the men, were drinking and gambling. At least three street-bookies lifted betting lines in our street. Our close at 118 was used by a bookie called Tommy Hyndman. He was quite a nice kind of man and many an unfortunate was given a bung by him. Then again, as it was unlicenced in those days, very few expenses were entailed, most of the runners and watchers were unemployed. And the low-down house they used to pay out the winners was made available to them from the tenants for a small fee.

The bookies always made sure that the close where they operated had several escape-routes because it was a fact of life that the police always endeavoured to grab the guy who was taking the betting slips and they used all kinds of tricks to try and trap them. One favourite disguise was to pretend they were a plumber coming to fix a burst pipe up the close, they had the usual working clothes on with a bag of tools and a water key. If he got near the bookie's lifter then he was taken to jail, at that time in Old Dalmarnock Road. The lifter's betting slips and cash was confiscated and he no doubt was charged and eventually fined.

Later on it became more sophisticated because I can remember a well-known bookie who had a betting shop in Cowcaddens. He got prior warning from his friendly neighbourhood cop about a raid and so warned off his good punters. He got several dozen occupants from the model-lodging house in Milton Street to come along to his shop. When they were being taken into the Black Maria the bookie gave them five shillings each and another five bob to pay their fine, and everybody was happy apparently.

I also can remember a bookie who lifted lines facing my school, the Scared Heart Advanced School, in Pirn Street, off Dalmarnock Road. This bookie actually dreeped from a two-storey window which was probably about twenty feet high to get away from the police.

Hundreds of street bookies operated in Glasgow. It always struck me as amazing that they were all known to the polis yet they operated for years. They got the occasional visit with a fine but were back on the streets the next day as usual. So the legalising of it probably saved them a lot of bungs to the polis and the magistrates or whoever happened to be on the payroll.

There was another type of gambling that was rife in working class districts; this was Pitch and Toss, the tossing schools as they were known. They took place in isolated spots, and they also had several escape-routes, so most of the gamblers could get away in the event of a police-raid. It is said by known gamblers that it was the most honest game of the lot, unless you could get away with a two-headed penny which was most unlikely. Most of the schools were run by the local hard-men who also ensured that winners were not pestered or threatened. Also, apparently, if a hard-man fancied his chances he could fight to get into the running of a pitch.

I dont know if tossing schools exist today. I am sure they must.

In the thirties there were three quite large ones operated in the

east end of Glasgow. There was one on the banks of the Clyde at Cambuslang. It was run by the Tottens from Rutherglen as far as I understand. They also say that Jake Kilrain, an ex-British middleweight champion, done his 'toller' (prevented trouble) at it.

This was a huge school with several hundred men in attendance. For those of you not aware of the rules, if the person tossed two pennies in the air for - say £50 - and the coins landed on the ground with the two heads facing up your stake of £50 became £100. The second time you won it became £200 and the third time £400. After that you could walk away minus your original stake of £50 which went to the guys running the school. However, if you wished you could carry on tossing the coins every three times and could stop when you wanted then walk away. There was also side bets took place amongst the crowd that had nothing to do with the tollers. All in all most regular gamblers thought it was quite a fair game and went back time and time again.

The other big tossing school was at the side of the Clyde just next to, or at the back of, Belvidere Hospital. It was run by the McGrechans. I think the head guy was called Hughie. When I worked as a fitter in the Gas Board my helper was a toller at the McGrechan tossing school. He had been a local hard-man but when he worked with me he was quite a nice guy. But he did open my eyes to what took place behind the scenes. For a start, when we were talking about tossing schools we were talking about thousands of pounds. First the polis were sorted out. They knew when a raid was to take place and all the heavy gamblers were warned not to come on certain Sundays. A bit of come and go with disputed decisions was allowed to punters.

The tossing school I was most familiar with took place on a derelict site which had been a pottery. The local hard-men that ran it included the Webb brothers, Elie and David, whose mother lived three closes down from us in Bernard Street, and another brother played

football for an English First Division side.

The main hard-man of this tossing school was Neily McHugh who had been a boxer, either cruiser or heavyweight. He had an easy-going attitude and was never aggressive unless challenged. I remember a young tearaway stepping into the ring and Big Neily saying to him "Look son it's not worth getting a sore face for a few bob."

The young guy persisted then threw off his jacket and without taking off his bunnet Big Neily stepped forward and belted him on the chin. It was at least ten minutes before the young guy recovered and the big man laid a pound note in his hand and said "Away you go home son." I went regularly with my pal, who happened to be Neily's young brother. The tossing pitch was next to Barrowfield, home-ground to Bridgeton Waverley of the Central Football League.

Tossing schools were the workers' casinos and with mass unemployment few people strayed from their local neighbourhoods, where most of their social life took place. At the top of the old pottery site was an area known as Nelson's whippet ground. Here every Saturday, and most other days too, they raced whippets. It was the forerunner to the more sophisticated greyhound racing but it still took place after dog-tracks like Carntyne, the Albion and the White City had opened up. Unlike professional dog racing the handler lifted the whippet up at the start of the race and its owner went down to the bottom of the area and flapped a hankie. When the whippet was released it ran to its owner. 0f course betting took place and big money could change hands. Whippet racing remains a popular pastime in some parts of the country, particularly in the old mining villages.

In the early 1930s Clyde Football Club who were in the Senior First Division starter to run greyhound dogs at their Shawfield Stadium. They became the fourth racing track in Glasgow to operate under license of the Greyhound Racing Association and its rules. The others were the

Albion, Carntyne and the White City. There were also Ashfield, Clydebank, Mount Vernon and other dog-tracks but they were unlicensed, they were called 'flapping gaffs'. Some punters could not afford the entrance fee into Shawfield Stadium so they started making a book outside on what the Sodia Wastes, so called because it was a dumping ground for the the notorious White's chemical works, and hundreds of others. But the outside enterprise was quite successful as you could see (?)

street entertainment

One of the most popular and spontaneous kinds of entertainment happened on the street, it came from the musicians and singers who frequented Brigton. They ranged from the poor badly-clad men or boys who would sing in the backcourts for a jeely piece thrown from the window, or a copper to make up the price of a bed for a night in one of the hundreds of model lodging houses that were dotted around Glasgow. Then you had the more professional types who would be accompanied by a fiddler or an accordeon player. One would keep singing or playing while the other caught the coppers in a bunnet.

But there was no doubt about the most popular form of street entertainment, this was the semi-professional jazz bands that played in all the densely populated streets throughout the district and came into the street usually on a Friday evening or a Saturday afternoon. They usually had one or two singers, a set of drums, an accordeon, and a trumpet or saxophone. The singers had to have a very loud voice as no method of ampiflication was available in those days.

Then there were the step-dancers who used their own board for the intricate steps they carried out. Another highlight was the dancers who disappeared up a close and come back out wearing some outrageous costume. They could do anything, from the sailors' hornpipes

to the soft shoe shuffle. There was always a Jolson singer who would blacken his face just like the original.

The acts often lasted an hour and hundreds of pennies were thrown from the crowded tenement windows, thronged with people who had a grandstand view of the whole performance. Most of the audience would be sitting on pavements with all the children, starting from the smallest, sitting at the front. But people even sat on the roads. It was amazing that when the performers finished and went round with the bunnets hundreds of coins came cascading down from the windows. This was a period when poverty was a way of life for most people.

A nice summer's Friday evening or a Saturday afternoon were the most popular times as there was maybe a copper left after the 'broo' money had been spent. 0r maybe some of the punters had got turn at the horses. There is no doubt the street perfomers did alright. 0ne of the turns I remember well was the O'Leary Brothers who went onto grace the stage of theatres like the Metropole, the Queens, the Princess and the Scotia.

This was the 1930s and a street that was 150 yards long could house who knows how many hundreds, maybe thousands, of people. You might wonder why such these events could take place on an open street. For a start the street was closed off for the performance. But also, to my knowledge, in the whole of my Street at least, there was nobody who owned a car. The only cars people ever saw were for funerals or maybe belonged to the doctor, or maybe a wedding was on. The main traffic was horse-drawn.

They also had benefit concerts in the extended backcourts that existed in our area due to the demolition of old houses and occasionally old handloom mills, even blacksmith shops that had stood before the tenements were built.

I remember one of the largest concerts in the 1930s was in aid of

a woman who was charged with the murder of her husband. It was later reduced to manslaughter. Her name was Baillie and she had several boys, one of whom I knew. As well as the usual amateur turns several well-known personalities made appeals for help to defend her. Many of her supporters were there on the day with petitions which most of the people signed

It was only one of the many concerts held on her behalf, not only in that back court but in many more.I had never seen such a crowd and has all the boys like me were up on the roofs of the old wash houses we had a good view of the crowd and there must have been five or six hundred. As far as I understand the campaign was quite successful as the charge was reduced and as she had a young family the sentence was lenient.

Dancing

Undoubtably the most popular pastime and the least expensive pastime in that period was ballroom dancing. Glasgow was famous not only for the large number of venues that catered for the dancing public but the high standards that prevailed.

There were two types of dancers catered for; the younger element who took up modern dancing and the more mature dancers who were more fond of what was regarded as select or old time dancing. As most of the boys you went about with when you left school were already going to the dancing, you really could do nothing else but save up to get yourself a suit with long trousers, and then get taught the rudiments of dancing without standing on your partner's feet. So all dressed up in my cooperative suit I went with an apprentice joiner I knew to enrol in the Dobson School of Dancing held at the Orange Halls in Cathedral Street. The lessons were given by Mr & Mrs Dobson who were quite strict and I

must say within a few weeks you began to get the hang of it. And while you were no Gene Kelly at least the girls did not run away when they saw you coming up to ask them to dance.

The boy I went with had become a really good dancer. B ut I found out he was taking extra lessons at the McEwan School of Dancing. It was no big deal. As far as I was concerned the 6d per night lessons at Dobson's was good enough for me. But he trailed me around the more professional dance halls and he could pick out at a glance the best lady dancer in the hall. He would try to get her up for every dance, till one night at the Dennistoun Palais the partner of one girl took exception to my pal's continual approaches. The guy was a well-known amateur boxing champion and we had to beat a hasty retreat.

Every district had a public hall some times districts like Brigton and the Couper Institute in Cathcart had two halls both of them fully occupied on a Friday and Saturday night with ballroom dancing. The three Glasgow evening papers in those days the Evening Times, Evening Citizen, and Evening News carried several pages of adverts of all the dancing nights available in public halls. Then you had the small independent halls like the Stanley in Plantation, the Tower at the round toll in Possil Road the F. & F. in Dumbarton Road, Partick, later to cater for roller-skating.

Everybody wanted in on the act due to the popularity of dancing, even jumior football clubs like Shawfield Juniors in Oatlands the Strathclyde in Parkhead and Rutherglen Glencairn, the only club still operating.Then of course you had the real status ball rooms like the Locarno in Sauchiehall Street, The Albert in Bath street, the Dennistoun Palais and of course the Plaza at Eglinton Toll, still going strong at the present day. All this long before Fred Astaire was even heard of. Then too of course there was the Barrowland. But in talking about the Barrowland we have to talk about Maggie McIvor, Queen of the Barrows.

Did Maggie McIvor steal a street?

Margaret Russell started business in a wee fruit shop next to the Star picture house, sometime after her marriage to James McIvor in 1888. They moved to Green Street, Calton then to Marshall Lane in the Gallowgate, and started to hire out barrows for 1/6d per week to hawkers and street traders before the 1914/18 world war. She carried on the business after her husband was called up to the Forces then extended it to horses and eventually to property.

That she was a very shrewd business woman was beyond doubt. When she opened up her first barrow ground in Moncur Street in 1920 it was based on the present Barrowland site. Some of the houses and factories had become derelict and were demolished, so Maggie McIvor extended the Barrows. In 1923 electric lights were installed over the hawkers' stalls and in 1926 a roof erected over the whole place; in 1928 the Barrows were enclosed.

Many people, including hawkers and Caltonians, have wondered for years what happened to Calton Entry. It ran parallel with Kent Street and was very narrow; from the Gallowgate it went south, crossing Moncur Street where it continued to Stevenson Street. This last wee bit is the only part remaining.

Calton Entry was scarcely about 50 yards in length and had about 10 or 12 tenement closes. I suppose mainly hawkers and some old cotton-weavers would have occupied the houses. In the late 1920s the tenement at the corner of Gibson Street and the Gallowgate into the Calton Entry, was demolished. Maggie McIver used the spare ground to expand her operation. She hired a barrow at 6d a day, occasionally double that for a Saturday. With the barrows in Moncur Street being one of the largest and most popular it was no surprise when the remaining tenement was demolished the plan to build Barrowland took

shape.

Her husband died in 1930 from Malaria as a result of his war service but this did not deter her; she pushed on with her ambition to build a modern dance hall over the market place. It was her boast that the whole enterprise was completed without an architect, no surveyor, not even a contract but a shake of the hand. In1934 the Barrowland Ballroom was completed and opened on Christmas Eve by the proud owner; many local dignitaries attended, including Mr James Langmuir, Procurator Fiscal.

She did not restrict her activities as her oldest son Sammy opened up a secondhand car market under the Barrowland Ballroom from Monday till Friday. That it was the mecca for dancers during the whole week goes without saying as she also brought famous guest bands like Jack Hylton, Henry Hall, Roy Fox and Teddy Joyce. I remember seeing and hearing the jazz legend Coleman Hawkins. Lena Martell and Maggie Bell were resident singers much later, with the Gaybirds Band.

It must have come as quite a surprise to a few of the big businessmen of that era, that a small, quite insignificant woman, not very young and with a growing family, could undertake such an enterprise. Those who really knew from her early, meagre beginnings, had no doubt she would make it. In the process it could also be said of this shrewd business woman, that she managed to steal a street.

Dr. Cossar's gymnasium

My first recollection of the Calton Entry was not of the street itself but of a gang of boys who hung about it and called themselves the Calton Entry Boys. I was a young schoolboy, along with a few other boys from Bernard Street, and we started to attend a gymnasium. It was situated in Saracen Head Lane, just up from the 'Serry Heid'.[1] Dr. Cossar ran the

[1] still the local name for the Saracen Head Public House.

gymnasium on behalf of a religious organisation. His main function seemed to be finding small boys prepared to emigrate to countries of the British Empire, like Canada, New Zealand and Australia where they were employed as labourers on farms.

Dr. Cossar was a tall, grey-haired man who wore a naval cap with a navy blue jersey; he was very strict. If we laughed or jostled each other when we had been asked to join in prayers or sing hymns, he would use a large belt across our legs or bottom. On a cold night you sometimes went home with your bare skin tingling.

I suppose we could have found the same type of facilities nearer home, but only if we joined a B.B. company or Boy Scout troop. Apart from being required to join a church the discipline and regimentation of these organisations did not appeal to me. The only question Dr. Cossar ever asked was "Are you a good protestant?" Even though I attended Sacred Heart School and was a catholic I had no difficulty in saying "Yes." One time we took a new wee boy from Bernard Street with us. He kept tugging my jersey and saying to me quite determinedly "But you're a fucking catholic." He only stopped when I gave his arm a good twist. Dr Cossar spoke with great authority and conviction and he started pestering us to sign up for immigration but he never did persuade any of the boys from Bernard Street.

The Calton Entry Boys were mostly catholics and felt it it was their duty to challenge the boys from Dr. Cossar's gymnasium as they made their way home. You were ambushed when you reached the bottom of Saracen Lane with loud shouts of "Get those dirty protestant bastards." I never waited to explain I was a good catholic, I doubt if it would have been appreciated, I was too busy beating Jack Lovelock's world record - I was always a better runner than fighter. The Calton Entry Boys never managed to catch me but even the ones they did grab only got a slap or a kick on the arse and if you started to greet they all ran away. Their

main thing was the chase itself and the shouting of 'fuck King Billy', and the defeat of his disciples, which was a joke when you consider the religion of our wee team.

I have since learned that Dr. Cossar's gymnasium was only one of hundreds used by religious zealots and organisations to attract and entice young boys from poor homes to emigrate. One of the leaders in this mass export of children was Dr. Barnado, followed by all the main protestant religions, from the Church of England Waifs and Strays Society to the Salvation Army, on through the Roman Catholic Church. All in the name of religion, in most cases without the parents' consent, even their knowledge. It was slave labour on a massive scale and started as far back as 1618 when the first children were sent to Richmond in America, and it continued right until 1967. In excess of 150,000 children were sent to every corner of the British Empire without a voice of protest from any section of the media or establishment, and with the complete connivance of most of the churches and religious bodies.

The only public place that was available to practice gymnastics was in the Glasgow Green across James Street from Fleshers Haugh It was an open air part of the green with a small pavilion with an open shelter. The gymnasium consisted of a few sets of bars for horizontal exercises, two sets of parallel bars, three sets of high chain rings and a vaulting horse. Apparently it had been donated by a local industrialist who felt that it would be beneficial to the young men who were unemployed and it really was a boon to them but it meant that the likes of younger boys like me had to wait until they went home for their tea in order that we could get the use of the equipment.

swimming, football , boxing

In the square mile about our street there was no public playing fields, there was no swings; absolutely no facilities whatsoever for young people, there was not even a blade of grass to be seen. The nearest swimming baths were at Whitevale Street in Dennistoun and they were always busy, especially in the summer during the school holidays. There were of course Greenhead swimming baths adjacent to the Glasgow Green. It was these baths that I went to when we were taken by Sacred Heart Advance Central School where I was a pupil

Until I went to the above school at 10 years of age I never received swimming lessons but fortunately, as our family managed to get a holiday at the the seaside during Fair[2] I did manage to pick it up. It would have been an impossible task for our Physical training teacher to give any type of real tuition in the thirty minutes of our one swimming period.

Most of the boys I played or went about with were football mad. While I did play on occasion, I was more interested in running, gymnastics and boxing. If the game started when I was there and they were chosing teams I was not picked first but I always got a game, I was quite heavy-built and I could run. The nearest football fields were in the Glasgow Green and as it was usually five or six a side with a wee tanner baw, the 'Green was too far away, too big and too busy. We made use of the large backcourts - or what was called the big "Booly" - in Walkinshaw Street.

It was not surprising that football was very popular in Brigton as Fleschers Haugh in the Glasgow Green saw the birth of Rangers and Celtic over a hundred years ago. Celtic Park itself was only five minutes walk from Bernard Street. However, it was not only Senior teams like Celtic and Clyde that were in Brigton, you had Intermediate teams like Bridgeton Waverley who played in Barrowfield Park next door to

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2 Glasgow's annual summer holiday, the last two weeks in July, is known as 'the Fair'.

Parkhead. Other teams in the same league as 'Waverley were Strathclyde and also Parkhead Juniors who played at Helenvale Park. The park is still there but Parkhead Juniors have disappeared along with the other two. There are two teams in the east end who were in the old Intermediate league and still exist; Rutherglen Glencairn and Cambuslang Rangers.

It would be inappropiate when talking about football in the 1930s not to mention the Churches League teams who played on the Glasgow Green which is also where Juvenile and Secondary Juvenile teams played, alongside the many school teams and works' teams. Not only were there not enough football pitches to play on, a number of teams used the backcourt wash-houses in the vicinity of the 'Green to strip and then the players would race across to the Fleshers Haugh.

We also had a very wide choice of games to watch even although we could not afford to pay. Even the fourpence you paid at the boys' gate to watch Clyde or Celtic was beyond us. But in those days it was allowed for the paying public to lift young boys over the turnstyle gates without them having to pay. Most fathers took their sons to games but if my big brother James was not going to Parkhead I usually stood at the pay-in entrances along with dozens of other wee boys. We kept asking "Gonny gie us a lift mister?" and seldom anybody refused. Of course we could always get in at Bridgeton Waverley's ground at Barrowfield which was easy access and nearer home. Their stadium was only protected by corrugated steel sheeting, it was always quite loose and not very well maintained.

Like most wee boys you went through the usual phase, when your favourite player or team was doing well you always wanted to emulate your idol. As I was a Celtic follower I also chose some of the players of a team I can still rhyme them off by heart; John Thomson, Cook, McGonnigle, Wilson, McStay, Geatons; R. Thomson, A Thomson, McGrory, McGonagle

Scarff

(Scarf) and Napier. It was probably one of the most famous teams ever - maybe more famous than the Lisbon Lions - not because of achievment but the fact that John Thomson was accidently killed when playing against Rangers,

In those days we were out in the backcourts after a cup final or an international with our tanner ball. There was no chance of us in those days with our 'Setirday-penny' ever affording to buy a strip. Events like Wimbledon or the Open Golf championships never came into our world. There was not a single wireless in the whole of Bernard Street as far as I knew.

During that period a few of us decided to start a team of our own and as we all lived within a few closes of each other there did not seem to be any problem. So we called in a big boy, Neilly - I am not sure what his surname was - but he was quite a decent boy and was very honest. We extended the contributors till about ten or so boys were putting in money to the kitty. After a few weeks we began to wonder when we would be buying a real football as we knew there was over £1 in our funds. We kept asking Neilly about the ball but he kept saying "All in good time" till eventually some of the boys wanted their money back. We were flabbergasted when he told us he had spent it. When we asked to see the ball or the strips all he could show us were bandages and linament. That was what he went out and bought. Big Neilly was in the Boys Brigade so no wonder I never joined, although he went on to be a Captain.

It would not be possible to speak about street football in Bernard Street without mentioning a girl by the name of Tillie Cunningham. She stayed up our close and was older than me. She was not only the best girl footballer in the whole district, she was miles ahead of most of the boys. As a matter of fact when the boys were picking a team if Tillie was there she was usually chosen first. Although well-built she was a

typical girl wearing a dress, no such items like jeans were available in those days. While her hair was always short she could head the ball with force and direction and she could kick the ball with both feet. As far as I recall she played for a ladies team from Rutherglen called Kelly's. I do not think Tillie's football career lasted long; the last time I remember her she was married with a growing family.

There were a few good players in our district, but they had to play on dirt pitches and not many made the major leagues. There was one boy who signed for Celtic but I doubt if he survived a season. Another young man, Willie Webb, did make it to senior football but it was for an English club. 0f course there were many Intermediate and Junior players around.

The type of sport that did attract a large number of boys, includung myself, was boxing. It was the era of the Benny Lynchs the Jake Kilrains, Johnny McGrorys and many more. Boxing clubs were sprouting up all over Glasgow and old premises like churches and factories were being converted into boxing clubs. Also there were arenas like the Grove Stadium at Finnieston which was under the auspices of Johnny McMillan, ex featherweight champion; and the L.M.S. Rovers club where amateur championship contests were held.

Apart from the glamour of the ring it was a fact of life that if you lived in a tough district fighting was thought the best way to defend yourself. I did very little about it myself until one of my pals got a set of boxing gloves for his Christmas. 0ur stairhead lobby became a ring for the half a dozen boys who lived up the close. Despite the complaints of the neighbours it kept us out the cold during the long winter nights. And it never got out of hand because the boxing gloves were too big to really hurt you.

Later on, when I was an apprentice plumber working on a building site, I met an apprentice bricklayer called Hughie Finnerty. His

brother was the Scottish lightweight champion. Hughie did a little amateur boxing himself and was a member of McGhee's club in Parkhead. He took me along to join. I attended for quite a while and began to get the hang of the equipment, particularly the punch balls and the skipping ropes.

It was a very busy club and there was quite a number of boxers who fought regularly, both amateur and professional. There was not much tuition took place unless you were capable of entering a competition. The trainer was called 'Cumshy' Cameron. After a few wee club contests he asked me to enter a small competition in the L.M.S. Rovers. I jumped at the chance. On the Saturday night I turned up with a new pair of baseball boots which was the cheap alternative to the real McCoy - leather boxing boots. They were quite a tight fit but I thought they would ease off.

When I went into the main hall where the ring was I got the fright of my life. There were several hundred people from all over, shouting on the boys from their own clubs. My opponent was a boy much smaller than me and apparently he had won a few fights due to his boxing skills. I was very nervous but the man in my corner told me to relax. This I could not do as my boots were hurting my big toe and it made me flatfooted. I walked around the ring chasing that wee fair-headed boy. He danced about me like a fairy, but his powder-puff blows were not hurting me at all. However, I was getting very embarassed. No matter how many punches I threw at him he dodged them with ease, and in front of all these supporters of the noble art I felt a real dumbell. As the third and last round was reached my Second sponged my face and said "Grab him and hold him in a clinch son, and then belt him."

So as the bell went for the last round and my opponent danced towards me I managed to push him against the ropes and hit him a glancing blow. The referee stepped in and awarded the fight to the wee

boy. I left the ring with a few shouts from the crowd ringing in my ear. I was sick with embarassment and both my big toes were killing me with pain. Within a week both my big toenails had fallen off, so I could not attend the club for a few weeks. When I did return Cumshy Cameron told me he was quite pleased with my performance. Well that was not my opinion. My bitter disappointment with my baptism at the noble art disillusioned me. I got the feeling that perhaps my temperament did not equip me for the rigours of the boxing ring.

But when my feet returned to normal I attended the club again, although not so often. 0ne night a trainer asked me if I wanted to give a boxer called Jim Devlin a short spar. He was a bantam weight so there did not seem much harm in it. We sparred around for a short time and I thought I was doing alright, having managed to hit him a few times. Then the trainer shouted "Last three minutes." When I moved towards Devlin he caught me one on the nose with a very hard right-hand punch. I tried not to show it but there was no doubt it did hurt me. I tried to land a blow in his direction but Cumshy Cameron stepped into the ring and stopped the fight. I was about to ask what was wrong when I felt the taste of salt in my mouth and discovered my white training vest was covered in blood streaming out from my nose,

I do not remember what Cumshy said to Devlin although he did indicate his displeasure at the power of his punch and the fact that the guy had broken my nose. I was cleaned up and and two cotton wool pads were put on my nostrils. I did not say a word when I got home. My nose was swollen but the bleeding had stopped and there was really no pain. But my mother insisted that I was not going back to that club anymore. That was not the way I saw it. After all, I had boxed with a professional and had given as much as I received. And to some extent I regarded it as an honour that it had taken a champion to break my nose. However, I reckoned without my oldest brother James. Him and one of

my cousins - Walter Scott - went up to McGhee's Club and they warned Devlin that if he took a liberty again there would be a real confrontation, and no Marquis of Queensborough rules this time.[3]

While I never went back to the Boxing club I retained my interest in boxing and managed to see some of Scotland's favourite boxers, and there were many during the 1930s. However, as you get older you witness many of the fighters you always admired once they are over the hill, and in very poor circumstances - in boxing parlance, shuffling along.

I remember Benny Lynch as a can-boy when they were building Hillington Estate. I mentioned earlier the great Jake Kilrain, British middleweight champion, but who was working as a toller at one of the largest tossing schools on the banks of the Clyde. I also met a retired boxer called Paddy Docherty who had beaten Benny Lynch three times as an amateur. He was working as a handyman and cleaner in Pollock library.

Later when I was working with the Gas Board I had a mate called Alex Ferries who had been a flyweight boxer during the Benny Lynch era. He actually fought Lynch for the Scottish flyweight championship and was beaten on points. His purse for that fight was 30 shillings for fifteen rounds and Benny Lynch gave him an extra £I.

Alex lived in a small room and kitchen in Fielden Street off London Road. He was one of the nicest men you could meet, despite his broken nose, cauliflower ears and marked eyebrows - his 'earnings' from over two hundred fights. He was so gentle and soft spoken it was hard to believe that he had been a professional boxer. When you contrast the Alex Ferries of this world with the men behind-the-scenes of professional boxing like the George Dingleys, who was a manager and

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[3] My broken nose did not alter my appearance. But I had to get an operation very recently in the Glasgow Royal Infirmary when it became apparent the broken bone was obstructing my breathing.

promotor in the late 1930s. It is another indictment of a system that brutalises people, all in pursuit of profit at any cost.

Gangs and religion

The only occasions that I ever witnessed any gang activity were usually when one gang invaded another gang's 'street' or territory. In many cases it was a reprisal for some earlier affray where a member of the invading gang had been set about. The gang fight consisted of one group of boys some as young as 8 or 9 years old, chasing the other boys and shouting "cha-orge", at the same time as they threw stones or sticks. If they manage to catch somebody then they punched or kicked him. When the other gang saw this happening they re-grouped and made a countercharge to rescue the victim. It never lasted more than 15 minutes or so. Then someone would shout "Here comes the polis" and it was all over. There may have been serious injuries suffered but I cannot recall any.

The only time I did see weapons used was when an Orange Walk went through Bernard Street. Despite the fact that most of the residents were Protestants the majority were not sympathetic to the Orange Walk and resented them taking the march into Bernard street. When some of the Billy Boys who were in the walk started to attack some of the Stickit Boys who were standing peacefully at the corner of Marquis Street the whole walk was brought to a halt. Hundreds of fights were taking place all along the street and weapons were used. This I do know as my sister Peggy went to the aid of a young man who had sought shelter in our close when chased by the Billy Boys. He was bleeding profusely from a head wound caused by an axe. We took him into our house and gave him a cup of tea after bandaging his head. To my knowledge that was the last time an Orange Walk ever went through Bernard Street.

That Brigton and the east end were tough areas goes without

saying but anyone who used a razor, a knife or an axe were ostracized. And if it was clear that a 'liberty' had been taken some of the local hard men who did not require weapons had a 'quiet word' with the culprits. It makes you smile when you read about the exploits of the so-called 'Gang-Bust' Chief Constable, Percy Sillitoe, who went onto become the head of the Secret Service.

Many observations have been made about the Glasgow street gangs of the 1930s and books both factual and fictiononal have been written about them. As a teenager in the late thirties I do not recognise the characters described in books like *No Mean City*. I never saw or even heard of any individual gang-member strutting about the street with two open razors sticking out of his waistcoat pocket. Regarding Sillitoe's claims that he had smashed the Glasgow street gangs, as a young boy I once saw a single policeman appear in a street where two gangs were having a confrontation and both groups of so-called gangsters disappeared like snaw aff a dyke.

In Brigton and the east end you had probably more gangs than anywhere else in Glasgow. There were the Sally Boys from Salamanca Street, Parkhead; the Norman Conqs from Norman Street in Dalmarnock; also the Chanty Boys from Fraser Street, off London Road. There were gatherings of older men at street corners in Bernard Street; they were known as the 'Stickit'. Then you had the Baltic Fleet from Baltic Street and the Nunny Boys from Nuneaton Street, both in Dalmarnock. From the Calton you had the San Toy, The Tongs, the Tiny Tongs and the Calton Entry Boys. I heard about the Cumbie from Cumberland Street, and the Bee Hives also from the south side, and there was the Cheeky Forty from Garngad. No doubt there were many more in other districts that I had never heard about. All the above mentioned were only street gangs and many of them had a majority of Roman Catholics in their ranks.

The largest and best known gang was undoubtedly the Billy Boys who stood at Brigton Cross. Their praises still get sang about every Saturday at Ibrox Park. Nearly seventy years after I first heard it sung, as a person who had a Catholic upbringing, it still hurts when I hear the thousands singing "Up to the knees in Fenian blood surrender or you'll die".

The only time I gave the Brigton Cross a miss was on a Saturday afternoon when the Celtic supporters were coming from Parkhead because you could be sure there would be a confrontation. There was also another gang at Brigton Cross called the Derry Boys. They were the youth section and were equally as vehement against Celtic supporters. The highlight of their year's activity was the 12th of July when they participated in the Orange Walk, even although the officials of The Orange order did not openly recognise them.

There is no doubt that Billy Fulton was the best known gang member. He was regarded as the leader of the Billy Boys, particularly after Chief Constable Sillittoe was interviewed by many newspapers. I do not know where or when Billy Fulton led anybody, as I passed Brigton Cross nearly every day of the week, and anytime I saw him he was standing at the corner of Orr Street and London Road, laughing and joking with a crowd of young men.

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They smoked a Woodbine together then the crowd left the scene, I found out much later that the older man was the notorious Johnny Phillips who always stood at Bridgeton Cross and issued challenges at the drop of a hat. He was regularly jailed for breach of the peace, he survived right into his late fifties and died while in police custody. The above was a more common agenda than the headline-grabbing talk of gangs and gang fights.

While I never was a member or went about with any gang I was a

catholic in a predominatly protestant district, and that meant you had to be prepared to defend yourself if you were attacked. As many of the boys I played with were protestants, and my mother was one as well, I never had any hang-ups about religion.

The only occasions I got involved in fights about religion was on St Patricks day, at my school it was a holiday of Obligation and we went to the chapel with a sprig of shamrock pinned to our jerseys. When we walked past John Street school in Hozier Street we were reguarly challenged by what we called the "toffs", because they wore a school uniform. They surrounded us and shouted “A Billy or A Dan?” Some of the smaller boys usually cried and ran away. I could never do that and no matter the odds most of us stood our ground and gave as much as we got.

In all the years I lived in Brigton these were the only occasions I can remember when it was my religion that caused the fight. But it unfortunately was true that I did seem to fight a lot, and regularly some boy would be saying to me "I'll see you after four." Many a time I regretted turning up as I was not a big boy and I seemed to challenge boys older and bigger than me. And of course when my mother saw the torn jersey and bleeding nose there was no pictures for me on Saturday.

In the tough environment that was part and parcel of my upbringing I felt that you had no alternative but face the bully or there would be no end to it. Although I remember one time I was fighting a big boy called Jackson round a backcourt off Dalmarnock Road. It was an old cobbled back. He meant to grab me after I hit him but he tripped and hit his nose on an iron closepole, just as a woman came down the back stairs shouting at him "Away you go leave the wee boy alone, you should be ashamed of yourself." I did not wait, I grabbed my school bag and left looking back to see Jackson holding his nose.

I remember seeing a bare knuckle fight at Emery's farm on the banks of the Clyde. It was between two men both stripped to the waist. One was quite a tall man about 19 or 20 years of age. The other was a small man, heavily built, probably in his late twenties or even hitting thirty.

It was one of the most brutal things I have ever seen. Within a few minutes the shorter man was covered in blood as the tall man burst his nose with the first torrent of punches and his body was covered in blood. It seemed so one-sided. But despite being put on the ground repeatedly the wee man kept getting up and rushing the young man. This must have went on for at least 20 minutes or a half an hour and the crowd were calling for it to stop. But whenever a man stepped into end it the wee man punched him away and again kept at rushing the younger man. Eventually the younger fighter stepped forward and after helping his opponent to his feet he held out his hand and said "Alright you win Johnny". The older man wiped the blood from his body with hisshirt. The next thing was a bunnet was put round the crowd and the proceeds were divided between the two protaganists.

Part 2:

Work, awareness and activism

When I approached my fourteenth birthday I had made up my mind to leave school. It was not a difficult decision to make as in no way could I be described as an intellectual. It seemed to be my misfortune to be stuck firmly in the middle of the class. In subjects like English, geography and history I was above average. On most other subjects, except physical training, I languished in the lower half. While in no way blaming any of the teachers for my failure, none of them ever impressed me, right through nine years of education.

And many of them I hated, particularly the priests I had when I first went to Sacred Heart. There were two of them, Father Francis and Father Bernard. When they reached in their robes and pulled out the black three-tonged strap it was really frightening. And when they made you double your hands and then gave sometimes six lashes, very few boys could hold back the tears. What worried me was the fact they seemed to feel so pleased, as if it was a job well done. As one who got his share of that belt I can say your hand was sore for days and on one occasion when my mother noticed how black and blue it was she said if it happened again she would take it up with the headmaster. Afraid of the retribution I kept my hands well out of sight from her in future.

The priests were not alone of course; most of the other teachers were not interested in their pupils. Either you kept up with the best in the class or you fell by the wayside. I could not get out of school fast enough.

The first week after my fourteenth birthday I started to work my

way around the factories in Brigton looking for a job. I began at the Acme Wringer company, then Templeton's Carpets, Tullis and Martins leather works and so on. In all I must have went to nearly twenty factories and all said the same, "What school did you go to?" It was my first experience of discrimination. There was I with my new short trousers and shoes, my best woollen jersey, shirt and tie; a wee boy looking for his first job and all these people could think about was what religion I was. Probably that was the first time I became angry. Not with the bigots that were denying me a job because of religion, but the whole stupidity that divided people in their way through life.

The next thing I did was attend the vacancy section at the Labour Exchange in Meighen Street off Dalmarnock Road. The first day there I got a green card to go to a job for a message boy at the bottom of Saltmarket. It was a Golf Shop based in one of the several that you had to approach by going upstairs right in front of the shops. It was owned by a professional golfer named J. T. Donaldson. He had won several tournaments and now gave golfing lessons, he also manufactured and repaired golf clubs.

He was a very nice man in his fifties with red hair, he always wore tweed plus fours. My main job was to deliver clubs to warehouses like Rattray's in Candleriggs and French's off Argyle Street and many more. I also carried clubs and golf bags along to a new shop opened by J. Latters in Main Street Gorbals. He later became a very big name in the golfing world with many top players using his clubs.

My boss was a very unassuming man while liking a good dram, and he seemed to thrive with plenty of people around him. He stayed in a small house in Oatlands and worked long hours, not only making golf clubs but travelling to many courses giving lessons. His favourite was the old Turnberry course where his old time friend Jimmy McDowal was the Club professional. It was a regular journey once or twice a month to

catch the first train from the old St Enoch station to Girvan and then he took a taxi to Turnberry.

In those days Turnberry was owned by L. M. S. railways along with top class hotels like Gleneagles, the Glasgow Central and hundreds more. J. T. Donaldson assisted his friend on the Turnberry course giving golfing lessons. In those days only the creme de la creme - if that is the expression - could afford to stay there. But I think my boss looked forward to it as a day away from what for him a long and hard working shift in Glasgow. And of course he always carried his wee whisky flask, purely for medical purposes, for when they reached the 19th hole. He never spoke about the people he gave lessons too but once he did mention somebody. This was Lady Bird of the famous custard people. Apparently she got under his skin and he said it would be the last time he would go back to Turnberry if she was one of his pupils.

J. T. Donaldson liked golfing stories and one of his favourite was the one that Henry Longhurst wrote about when Walter Hagen and Gene Sarecen tied in the final of the British Open and the play-off was scheduled early the next morning. Longhurst was staying in the Turnberry Hotel with them. Passing the residents lounge well past 12 oclock he was surprised to see Walter Hagen laughing and drinking with a number of very attractive lady friends. Hagen greeted Longhurst as he walked past and asked him if he wanted a refreshment. “No thank you” he said “but do you know that Gene Sarecen has been up in his bed since 7 oclock?”

"Yes Henry but he sure aint sleeping. "

But J. T. Donaldson loved golf. He had a small practice room and nets in the back shop where he gave lessons most days. My time was taken up in the morning delivering clubs and bags, and generally going messages but I also started to fit grips on the clubs and sandpaper woods for the french polishers. If there was nothing for me to do the

boss did not object if I practiced at the nets. You used real golf balls and there was a reinforced canvas with a bulls-eye target that you aimed at. So with watching the many good golfers who came about the shop, and with some basic instructions from the boss, I developed as a good striker of the ball without ever setting eyes on a golf course. He eventually gave me an old secondhand set for myself but I was too self conscious to take them home. I would not be seen walking into Bernard Street carrying golf clubs. In those days golf was regarded as a toffs' game. At least that was what I thought.

My first job in the morning after the shop opened was to fix the two showcases atop with two large golf balls to the railings at the bottom of the stairs. In those days Saltmarket was one of the busiest streets in Glasgow with hundreds of people passing your doors. And before street-trading was licenced most street corners had some kind of barrow selling from fruit and fish to hot chestnuts.

The boss was a good mixer and all sort of characters came about the shop. A regular was the well-known Mickey Casey. He had been quite a dandy in his day but drink and the good life, with a few fights and tumbles, had left poor Mickey with a slight deficiency. He was completely harmless and for a few shillings some of the bookies and shopkeepers would give him some kind of suit or costume to wear for a dare. Some days he would be dressed in evening ware, other days he would be done up as a kiltie in full highland dress, or like Charlie Chaplin with a bowler hat. There was always crowds of children following him. While he sometimes carried a cane he never was violent and the police treated him with respect. Unless he had become intoxicated. Then he was given a bed for the night. Or if he was fined some of the local shopkeepers would pay his fine.

Every morning the famous florist Mary Fox put a fresh flower in the buttonhole of whatever costume he was wearing. There were so

many characters from that period, including the famous Clincher, the only man in Glasgow who carried a certificate to prove he was sane. I remember seeing him with his top hat and cane selling his paper at the corner of Argyle Street and St Enoch Square, his paper was called *The Clincher* .

Some of the men who frequented the golf shop used to take the hickery tips that I cut off the top of the clubs. They put a small bent nail through them, cut a cigarette packet into a windmill and attached it to the nail. They would stand next to our showcases at the bottom of the front door and one of the would ask a passerby for a light. In those days most men wore caps or bunnets. When the man held up his fag to give a light, a windmill with a nail was attached to his bunnet and the poor unsuspecting guy would stroll up the Saltmarket with his windmill beltin away, wondering why he was being stared at. I can never recall anyone getting annoyed, we seemed to be more tolerant in those days.

One of the men who regularly gave us a visit was a very nice greyhaired man who lived round the corner in Steele Street. He was badly deformed and had very bad legs that must have reduced his height by more than 18ins. His name was Mr McFarlane and his son was the famous Willie McFarlane who won the Powderhall Sprint a record number of times and in his day was the fastest man in the world. The boss told me that young Willie and his pals played football in Steel Street in the evenings or Sundays. The Central Police station was just round the corner and they were regularly chased by the police, but they could never confiscate the ball. Every time they came Willie seized the ball and ran right into the Glasgow Green. No cop could ever catch him. So this really annoyed them and they got one of their beat-police who was an amateur runner to get after Willie but he was not successful either. After making enquiries he approached the family and at the end of it all *the* Willie Mcfarlane, was created the fastest man in the world.

In many rerspects the job with J. T. Donaldson was probably the most interesting and satisfying I ever had. But fate played me a dirty trick. The man who did the French polishing of the wooden clubs lived in a house above the shop and my last job before I left was to take him all the clubs that were required to be polished urgently. He lived two stairs up and I used to dive up the stairs and down again, unfortunately I had a habit of leaving the back door open for the few minutes necessary.

When I came in this morning the boss confronted me. A very expensive leather golf-bag was missing and the only explanation was that someone had taken advantage of me leaving the door open and had come in and stole it. I could not believe it as I was a very fit wee boy and I could jump the stairs four at a time. I had never seen anyone near the door. The boss said he had warned me about that happening, which was true. By this time I was crying and I told him I would just leave and get another job and I would try to pay for the bag. The boss said there was no need for that and I could carry on. However, I put on my wee jacket and walked. I did not wait for the wages I was due. I went crying along through the Glasgow Green then I reached Mieghen Street and the Employment exchange. I wiped my tears away and walked into the vacancy section and asked if they had any jobs. They gave me a green card for a paperworks in Moncur Street, Calton. I went right up immediately and I started the next day.

By the time I got home my mother was frantic and said “Where have you been?"

"Away gettin a job."

"But you’ve got a job."

I told her what had happened about the golf bag and everything. Then she floored me. "Mr Donaldson has been up to the house. There was no bag stolen. He just wanted to learn you a lesson."

I started to cry again. "You mean to say he told me a lie?"

That destroyed my wee world. I would never work for him again, no matter what he offered me. My mother tried to coax me but there was no way I could ever trust a person who could hurt a wee boy that looked up to him like I did. I never saw J. T. Donaldson in my lfe again. I never took the set of clubs he gave me and do not know what happened to the business.

Pulling the barrow

So I started with the firm of Dunlop & Jack who had premises in Moncur Street, Calton and it was my first experience of pulling a barrow. My job was to deliver toilet rolls to hardware shops and uplift paper and deliver it to printers all over Glasgow. It was a very light barrow but when you carried several reams of brown paper it was quite a pull going up places like the High Street. Fortunately there was plenty of horse-drawn carts in those days and the carter let you hook the barrow on to the back of his cart if your load was heavy. I suppose my ten shillings a week wage was much less than it took to keep a horse.

I did spend some time in the factory with the other few boys making up toilet rolls and parcelling orders. It was close to the Moncur street barrows and on a Saturday morning while waiting on the factory opening I used to give some of the stall holders a hand to set up their wares. I was intrigued by their methods and activity, the speed with which they set up the stalls with row after row of blooming apples interspersed with oranges, bananas and other fruits I had never seen before.

The most famous stall was Mary Ann's. At first I thought Mary Ann was the small woman with the loud voice who wore men's boots all time. I soon found out that it was the older woman who wore expensive

cardigans and very expensive rings and brooches. The highlight of their operation was the sale of bags of fruit. The small woman with the loud voice would shout “number one and number two” and so on down the rows until the bag was full of assorted fruit. Then she would shout "Who will gie me two bob. Never mind two bob,who’ll gie me wan and a tanner!". Then the hands started to go up and dozens of people walked away with bags of fruit.

I saw the wee woman for years after I left the Calton job, pulling a large barrow filled with fruit and vegetables into the city centre where they had a corner barrow stall. I never knew her name but Mary Ann was a very fortunate fruit hawker to have such a faithful and dedicated grafter.

My job at Dunlop & Jacks was not very interesting and the pulling of the barrow through the Glasgow streets was beginning to get me down, and as I began to take an interest in clothes I found the few bob I got for pocket money did not go very far. I started looking for another job. I heard that a firm at Farm Cross in Rutherglen were looking for boys and the starting wage was 14/-shillings per week. The firm was the well-known British Wire Rope Works at Farm Cross, Rutherglen. I asked for an hour off work and went for an interview. The foreman asked me to start on Monday. I handed in my notice and left Dunlop & Jacks on Saturday.

As I rode on my bike along Dalmarnock Road to my new job I kept thinking what I would do with the extra pocket money that would come my way. My new wage was 14/-shillings per week compared to 8/-shillings. I was not prepared for the noise in factory when I stepped through the doors to clock in. It was really deafening and the different types of machines confused me. Once the gaffer took me to the machine that I was to operate it was much better. There were quite a few new starts like me and they seemed to master it quite well. The machine was

a winder, not unlike the operation that took place in my mother's cotton mills, although this time it was wire we were winding, not thread.

The foreman was a nice pleasant man and very patient. After an hour or so of basic instruction he told the boy next to me to keep his eye on me. It seemed quite simple. I was in control of a machine that took the wire off a large wooden reel and roled it onto a small bobbin. When full it was ready to be placed in the large machines along with many other bobbins. Depending on the diameter it would be spliced through the machine to make wire-rope, sometimes over 2" thick. After a couple of days it seemed easy enough. Most of the workers in this section were boys of my own age and were all very helpful.

The days seemed to pass quite fast. The British Wire Rope Works sent their products not only throughout the U. K. but to the far east, Australia and Canada, so there was always plenty of orders to fulfil. There must have been about a hundred workers not including those in the offices who worked in a very distinctive building right on Farm Cross. This is the only part of the works still standing after decades of demolition and closures.

I struck up a friendship with a wee boy called Bertie, my nearest workmate on the winding section. After we had our pieces at dinnertime he took me to the football game at the back of the works. This was the highlight of the day. Bert was a good wee player, very tricky and he told me he had been in his school team and they had reached the schoolboys' semi-final championship. I could believe that, I could tell it by his play.

While in those days there was no betting taking place it was quite a competitive wee game with about seven or eight a-side. I did not expect to get playing but they were short and asked me ony. While I did not set the heather on fire, I must have done alright as it became a regular event. Wee Bert was pleased. His big pal Doddie ran the game

and took care of the ball. I became a regular player and we formed a friendly group.

Doddie was mad about football as well. Although he was overweight he really must have played the game because he was dominant when he got the ball. He was also well-built. He always picked Bertie and me in his team if he could and he came and took his tea with us. If we had any trouble with our machines he helped to get them working again. Doddie seemed to look after wee Bert. They both came from Cambuslang and they went on the same tram home together.

There was another man about twenty five years of age who operated the nearest large machine to our wee section. I was sure I knew him from somewhere, he was always very tidy in his appearance. It turned out he stayed in our part of Brigton. I passed him morning and evening, when he was walking home and I was cycling. I never paid him much attention. He seemed a bit of a loner, always taking his piece by the machine on his own, never coming to watch the football. He started to throw bits of waste at us when we were bending over our machines. We tried to ignore him. Then one day Bert let out a cry and he started shouting at the man. By this time I knew his name was Crawford. I went down to see what had happened and Bert said when he bent over his machine Crawford had stuck a pin into his backside. Crawford denied it. There was a piece of metal bar I used to tighten up my bobbin. After that, if I saw Crawford coming, I kept it in my hand until he passed. And I told him if he came near me I would belt him with it.

Apparently this had been going on for a long time and he seemed to get pleasure out of it. It is a fact that you cannot be vigilant all of the time. The following week, one day after we had come in from the football, I was leaning over my machine and I did not see Crawford at my back and he stuck me with a pin. I let out a yell, turned round and

saw him moving sharply back to his machine. I threw the metal bar and it just missed his shoulder. But just as I walked towards him in a threatening manner the gaffer came into the passage and I had to go back to my work. Crawford had pushed the pin in so far it drew blood.

I told Bert what had happened and he said something must be done about it. Things were quiet for a few days then one afternoon I saw Dodie approaching Crawford. He told him in no uncertain manner if he did not stop annoying the boys and bullying them he would be sorted out. The next day me and Bert were round reloading the large reels into position. I left him to get a drink of water. As I made my way back I saw Crawford walking to the back of our machines and I hurried. Then I heard Bert crying. Crawford had a hold of his arm and was twisting it up his back. I took a few more strides and as hard as I could I sunk my boot into his arse. He made an attempt to come near me but I had grabbed an iron bar and said "This time I won't miss."

I gave Bert a lift up and he was in pain, but we decided not to tell the gaffer. 0ur pal Dodie sorted him out when he was leaving the works and that was the end of Crawford's days as a bully. He approached me the next morning and said he was sorry and he did not mean any harm.

I had discovered he was in the Salvation Army; so was his mother and father, and his young brother played in their band. I saw him on many occasions marching in the ranks, long after I left the British Wire Rope Works.

starting the apprenticeship,

When I reached my sixteenth birthday the time had come to start my apprenticeship as a plumber with the firm that employed my big brother Walter. I gave my notice into the wire rope works and on the first working day after the Christmas and New Year holidays I began serving my time. The firm of plumbers and electricians was called John

Irving and Sons and based at Victoria Road, across from Larkfield bus depot. It was the furthest I had ever worked away from home.

When I set off with my big brother I assumed I would start with menial tasks in and around the workshop, which was what Walter had told me. So with a brand new pair of bib overhauls and my piece and new tea-can, and my 3ft wooden Rabone rule, I stepped into the workshop. To my surprise, between the apprentices of various ages and journeymen there were over twenty guys about to start work. One of them was a plumber called Willie Hunter. I was told by the foreman this was my mate and we were going to work at a new church being built at Cardonald.

When I walked out of John Irving's premises with my new overhauls on and carrying the tools I felt quite proud, particularly since it was my mother's wish being fulfilled. She always said that all of us would learn a trade. My entry into plumbing meant there were now two plumbers and a joiner in the family.

0n the journey to Cardonald I discovered that my mate stayed in Mathieson Street in the south side. Willie Hunter was a man in his late forties and had two daughters. We arrived at the church building site and while he was talking to the site foreman I was told to put the tools in one of the huts and wait. In a short time we started to take the cast iron U.G. gutters from the back of the hut to the side of the newly-erected church. 0ur first job was to fit the gutters to allow the roof to be slated. After an hour or so Willie told me to get the can on for both of us. I boiled the cans at the joiners' fire then shouted on him, and we sat on the joiners' wood pile up outside the huts and enjoyed our lunch.

Sitting in the yellow tramcar taking me home I really felt quite content, and fortunate that my mate was a nice man. It had been hard work carrying these cast-iron gutters onto the roof but when you looked up and saw the brand new gutters on a new church you felt satisfied.

Within a few days the next operation started. This was taking the rainwater down-pipes down to meet fireclay drains and fitting in the soil pipes to take in

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It was around this time I was introduced to my number one enemy, the Irving barrow. It was a huge thing with large heavy wheels and a rope between the shafts so that it could be pulled up hills. It made the small barrow I had at Dunlop & Jacks look and feel like a scooter. My first job with the barrow was when Willie and myself had to load it up for a job at the old Halfway house in Paisley Road.

The most direct road to our destination was to head for Mosspark Boulevard; as it was a climb all the way I consoled myself that it would be downhill on the way back. Willie was kind of slight in build and really did not assist me much, the first time I saw a horse and cart going in our direction I asked the carter if it would be alright if I hooked onto the back of his cart. There was no trouble and we got to the Halfway pub just in time for our piece.[1] After dinner we started to strip out what I took to be the old lead pipe in the attic. As I started to put it along side the old lead waterpipe Willie said "No son, this is block tin and it has to be kept seperate."

He explained that it had about the same value as silver. At three o'clock the boss appeared with bags. I had to put all the block tin in them, hide it under the lead and take it back to the shop, and I was not to let the boss of the pub see me.

I never gave his remarks much consideration until I spoke to the older apprentices who told me it was to prevent the Halfway House boss looking for a credit.

That afternoon I did not get back to the shop until after 5pm. and the workshop was closed but the girl in the office let me take the

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[1] sandwiches

barrow in. It was my first experience with the barrow but most certainly not my last. I had spent five hours pushing and pulling the thing.

I made several more trips to the Halfway job taking a load of block tin and lead away. We eventually did finish the pub job and we were sent to a job in the State Bar in Holland Street. This was one of many pubs owned by the Grant family including the Rogana. They also had the Royal licenced restaurant in West Nile street which was a famous gathering point for many football players. The job at the State bar was very complicated; the new 'Spanish' lounge had to be fitted into the old beer cellar without interfering with the normal functioning of a very busy pub.

This put a lot of strain on Willie Hunter and when he got excited he had a bad stammer. I had to calm him down and reassure him that he was doing okay. Then we had to re-line a lead storage system above the staircase entry to a billiard and snooker hall. Willie was not agile and the only way inside the cistern was to step up a10ft ladder and squeeze through a 12 inch space. Once inside there was plenty of room, it was least 6ft x 4ft.

I stripped the old lead out and lowered it with a rope to the ground. Willie tied on the new lead which had been cut to size. I pulled it up and fitted on the bottom and sides. He then gave me the solder and the blow lamp and I started to solder the joints and draw off points. It was half finished when Willie shouted my can was boiled. I was really glad as it had been extremely warm inside the cistern. As I tried to come out head first I found I could not go through the space. I tried doing it leg first but this was only worse.

I sat down and Willie came up the ladder and said "What are we going to do?"

I looked at him in astonishment. He was beginning to panic. If

anybody found out I was here it would not look right, me undertaking such a job, I was only into my second year. I said "Bring me up my can and my piece and I'll take my dinner and then the whole space'll get colder. I'll cool down and then try again" This we done and sure enough with me taking off my dungarees eventually I managed to squeeze out onto the ladder.

While we were working at the State we were sent to put in a water supply to the garden of Mr Don Grant, the boss of the firm. He lived in an old style villa along the road from Victoria hospital. It was a beautiful house, kept in good condition and seemed to be very exclusively furnished. They had a gardener who told us where to dig the track for the new water supply. We started to clear away the red chips and map the route. When I turned to use the pick I saw a boy about five or six years of age, he was pulling it across the lawn. I shouted on him and he moved faster but the pick was to big for him to lift and he tripped and fell. I ran over and picked him up but he ran away into the house crying I had hit him. I lifted the pick and a lady came out of the house and said "Did you hit the wee boy?" Just as I was about to deny it the gardener came and told the lady what had happened, she turned and went into the house We finished that job in record time and got back to the State Bar.

new mate, new experiences, shocks for a Celtic supporter

Then Willie and myself were split up. He went on to some other job and I was kept in the shop to run errands and help wee Davie Neilson the jobbing plumber. He did all the maintenance and repairs in the tenements on the south side of the city. He was a very conscientious man and an elder in his kirk. He had worked with the firm all his life, going back to the days when its founder, old John Irving, had started the business.

One of the first jobs we had to attend to was a choked drain in a backcourt in Florence Street in the Gorbals. It was a typical choked drain in the backcourt with the whole close and some of the low-down houses awash with filthy water. We had to locate the draincover which was at least 8" under water. Davie told me to gather up some of the bricks that lay strewn about the place and make some stepping stones in towards the grating. But as Davie stepped his way towards the centre the last brick slid away beneath his feet and he did a swan dive right into the puddle. I ran into the water without using the bricks and helped Davie to his feet. He rose and took his dungaree jacket off. It was covered in shite. He just walked straight in, took the draincover off the grating and using the drain-rods he cleared the water away. Then while one of the woman in the close was cleaning Davie's jacket and dungarees I washed the surface shit away and brushed his back clean.

After we got cleaned up we made our way back to the workshop. Waiting at the tram-stop Davie said to me "Are you sure I dont smell?"

"No," I said. When we boarded the tram we went upstairs. We handed over our tuppence fares to the woman conductor. She looked at us and said "I've heard of shite-bags but this is ridiculous, I should take yous two to Calder Street baths."

We got off as soon as we could. Davie's main concern was the loss of his clay pipe which had been smashed when he fell in the water. It was a jaw warmer. He soon got himself a new one.

The next mishap we had was when we were repairing an underground waterpipe in a back court in Shawlands. It was a high back with steps up from the close. The backcourt was covered in grass and, where the route of the pipe was, the digging was very soft, mainly sand. In no time at all we were down nearly 3ft and our prodding to where the water was coming indicated that we still had a bit to go. Davie told me to get back to the workshop for a ladder and support boards.

I was away nearly forty five minutes because I had to bring the barrow. When I got into the backcourt I could not see Davie. When I asked one of the women who lived up the close she said he had never left the back. I went across to the trench which by this time was over 6ft in length. When I looked down the hole it was nearly 5ft in depth and Davie was sitting smoking his new clay pipe. I said "What are you sitting down there for?"

"I kept digging," he said, "and when I tried to get out the sides didn't seem secure so I waited till you came".

We got the sides of the trench supported by our boards and completed the job then Davie treated me to his favourite, large London bun out of the City Bakeries. We made our way back with our barrow to the workshop. The next day we got a job to renew a broken w.c. in a tenement in Pollockshaws Road Road.

We never stocked any sanitary-ware in the workshop so it was necessary for me to pick a new w.c. from Smith & Holroyds at Bath Lane off Renfield Street. Davie had to alter the pipework and get prepared for my return. I went round to the shop to get an order and my car fare. As I only got threepence for my fare this just took me to Argyle Street both ways. It had been my practice to walk down to Cook Street. This then allowed me get a tram to Argyle street and walk empty handed up to Bath lane, but it left me with tuppence so I could get the tram outside the door of Smith & Holroyds right to Eglinton Toll.

In those days Renfield Street was one of the busiest streets in Glasgow and it was no joke balancing a w.c. on your shoulders as you squeezed through the crowds. Of course there was always the possibility that I could bump into some of the lassies that went to the dancing at the Calton Masonic. It would not have done any good for my image, kidding on I was a fully-fledged plumber.

But when I got into the workshop the next morning Jessie the

support". I outlined the background to the strike in Paris and the demands of the Paris workers. I caught a glimpse of Nesbit the full-time official and got the impression that he was embarassed, the resolution was passed unanimously, nothing was said by any of the officials present.

The area of the Pollok site that I was working on came near to completion and the plumbers' general foreman who travelled round all the sites learned that I was a welder. He asked me if I was prepared to work in the new Foam Slab prefabrication unit at Tollcross. As it was nearer home and an extra rate would be paid, I agreed. It seemed quite an exciting experience to begin with. The idea was that large sections of reinforced concrete slabs were created with windows and door spaces set in. Some of these sections weighed several tons. It all meant that with no more than five or six of them a house could be assembled in a few hours, on site and ready for the roof and internal finishing. Of course it was not a new idea really, I had worked with the Blackburn[1] in Dumbarton, they erected the whole house in sections and built thousands of them all over Scotland. They can still be seen, for instance in Carntyne, Glasgow.

Glasgow Corporation pushed ahead with its plan to solve the city's housing problem by building thousands of these Foam Slab houses. The number of areas it was happening kept growing. As far as we understood it several sites were ready, including one at Wellshot Road in Tollcross. Unfortunately the sections they used here were not only ten times heavier but some were at least 15 feet x 22 feet.

It was a big day as the first extended lorry with ribbons got ready to carry the first sections into the first site. The Lady Provost made a speech saying how important this development was for Glasgow's housing problem and she cut the ribbon. All the councillors and dignitaries cheered as the lorry went on its way to the site. Then the whole company, except the workers, retired to the factory office at Amulree Street for drinks and a buffet, and did not leave the place until mid-afternoon. But if they had waited they would have seen the lorries returning to the factory with all the prefabricated sections. It had been discovered that no mobile crane with appropriate lifting power and required span was available not only in the city but throughout Scotland. Glasgow Corporation now had to open negotiations with a firm in England to hire a crane that could do the job.

That is not the end of the saga. When at last all these houses were completed and then occupied they were found to be structurally unsound. Large gaps had appeared at their joint sections. After a short time the tenants were rehoused and the Foam Slab houses were demolished. As a result of the failure the Amulree Street factory became a plant for manufacturing reinforced concrete lintels and slabs, and my services were no longer required.

Politicking and meeting Harry McShane

The Communist Party was well-organised with a full-time industrial organiser responsible for trade union activity but it can be said that the main function was to get as many members or

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[1] info

sympathisers elected to influential positions. In John Brown's shipyard most of my time had been spent in political propaganda and industrial matters. Now I was back working on building sites I was usually Shop Steward and I got more active in my union branch. I was elected onto the Glasgow East Lodge of the P.T.U. The committee met in the I.L.P. rooms in Bridgeton. Within a year I was the branch Vice President and a delegate to the Glasgow Trades Council (which was where I received my finest education).

Glasgow Trades Council used to meet in the old Central Halls and the hall where we met was really large, it could hold about 200 people. At our monthly meetings it was unusual for it not to be nearly full. The Chairman at that time was John Johnston. I was still only in my twenties and when I look back it seems ridiculous that somebody as young could be involved in such an active role.

Also I had started to get involved in Brigton and I became Secretary of the local branch of the Party. It made a change, that and getting more active in the union. I was now in touch with the officials more often. A few of them had never worked in industry and it did not take too long for me to become disillusioned. I saw the methods the Party used to extend its influence on the membership. You were always being pushed to recruit new members along with new readers of the *Daily Worker*. Nearly every night of the week you had to be at a meeting of one sort or another.

We began organising open-air propaganda meetings on Sundays in backcourts and at street-corners. The Brigton branch had always been lively, it had an old established membership going back to the 1930s. There was also an enthusiastic section of the Young Communist League and they held a social and dance every Saturday night. Their premises were central, quite near Brigton Cross. I was fortunate that James McLaren, one of my closest friends, had also joined the C.P. and his political understanding was invaluable in extending the work we were doing. We did our fair share of fly-posting and most Friday nights we went out daubing slogans, so for the first time since the 1930s Brigton was regularly whitewashed. We started a local housing association and had good attendances at the meetings in Rumford Street School. Some of our members, including myself and James McLaren, were put onto the Calton Ward committee. We changed the nature of that cosy wee organisation, raising social issues and winding up its role as an admiration society for the local councillor, Helen [Rualt?], an old I.L.P. member who had a tendency to talk down to her constituents. We got the committee behind the fight for better housing.

In 1948 there was a by-election in the Gorbals, brought about by the fact that the sitting M.P. had been made the Minister of Pensions by the Attlee Government. The sitting M.P. was Georgie Buchanan, one of the I.L.P. group of original Red Clydesiders. When the date of the by-election was announced I had just stopped working at Fairfield's shipyard as a plumbers' welder and although I was still Shop Steward I knew I would never go back again. The Glasgow City Committee of the C.P. appointed me, for the duration of the campaign, to be the full-time election agent for Peter Kerrigan.

It was a responsible role I had for somebody so young and was to be the first time I had any real experience of Harry McShane. I have no doubt I was given the job because as well as

being so active in Brigton I had that long experience as a group leader in the factory branch in John Brown's. With one thing and another it gave me the tough pedigree that was needed to face up to McShane and the rebellious members of the Gorbals' branch. As a good little Stalinist I was to do what I was told.

All the Gorbals' members viewed me with suspicion. After the first meeting of the election committee I left the premises with Bob Saunders, then district organiser of the Plumbers Trade Union (P.T.U.). Harry McShane had a room in the Gorbals' branch premises and I remember when he was closing the door after us he said quite cheerily "Where do you stay?"

I said "0h we go east"

His reply was "That's quite appropriate, all the wise men come from the east."

However, as I started organising and working alongside Harry and the other Gorbals' comrades the cynicism with which they greeted some of the decisions of the Glasgow Committee were not entirely misplaced and I found to my surprise some of their political differences seemed to be sound.

Harry McShane's conversion to Marxism had taken its own route and he must have been one of the best-read people in the Socialist movement. He always returned to Marxism, never tired of explaining to young people its importance. 0ne of his favourite stories was how Marx took Pierre Proudhon's *The Philosophy of Poverty* and wrote *The Poverty of Philosophy*. By turning Proudhon on his head Marx showed how it was the emerging working class, with their labour power for sale, that was the real "gravediggers of capitalism" and not the petty bourgeois. He had a great deal of respect for Scottish philosophers like Adam Ferguson and Adam Smith and relished the fact that while Karl Marx rejected some of their conclusions he paid tribute to the contribution they made to the development of philosophical theory.

It should be remembered that he started out in life as a Catholic and in his teen was ardent in defending his faith. His first contact with Socialists came through attending their public meetings, and challenging their beliefs. He was well versed in the scripture and had some knowledge of the 'Papal Bulls', the encyclicals that were proclaimed from Rome. The Socialists, he discovered, were tough nuts to crack who were promising some sort of heaven here on earth. 0rganised religion, they argued, was useless in halting the ravages of capitalism. Harry would go home and think again. His conversion to Socialism was as dramatic as it was deep. Now on the other side his former fellow Catholics were to suffer the whiplash of his tongue for being false prophets.

After joining the Communist Party in 1922 he had two visits to Russia, but was not impressed when visiting an Atheist Museum. He thought the "Anti-God" propaganda was crude and would have an adverse effect in dispelling religious superstition. Christian Socialists like Conrad Noel, George McLeod and Geoff Shaw[2] had his admiration. In his later years he was to win the respect of his religious opponents like Archbishop Winning. His approach to churchgoing men and women was quite open, if they or the clerics wanted to throw in their lot

[2] any info on these three, is it Rev G. Mcleod of the Iona community?

with the Socialist Movement they were more than welcome.

Free-thought literature he took to like a magnet, becoming an avid reader of Ingersoll and Chapman Cohen. I remember him telling me about a meeting of the Comintern in Moscow during the 1920s where he was one of the two Scottish delegates. The British delegation on behalf of the CPGB took a particular decision and the two Scottish delegates supported it. The meeting then adjourned for lunch. When the delegates returned, to Harry's surprise the previous decision was dropped and the exact opposite was put forward. Finlay Hart was the other Scottish delegate[3] and he went along with the change. Harry did not. He was always suspicious of unanimous decisions and was not affraid of discussion and disagreements, but always provided they led to action. I feel that was one of the main reasons he was respected within the Labour Movement. Finlay Hart was the only prominent Communist Party member who was present at Harry's funeral.

When I was made full-time election agent I was by now married with a young family and I assumed I would receive the normal wages of a party organiser, but to my surprise the Glasgow Secretary Bob McIlhone gave me at least 50 shillings more. I felt uncomfortable about it and I remember I mentioned it to Harry and he said "Don't take any handouts, get the rate for the job," so I just returned the cash.

There were several disquieting features of the election campaign that were not apparent to most comrades involved. Peter Kerrigan was an imposing-looking candidate, standing over 6 feet tall, grey haired and quite distinguished and as an ex-Junior football player with Yoker Athletic he had the stature of a very fit man. In reality he was quite an aloof person who tended to lecture people rather than talk to them. I never got on friendly terms with him in the eight or so weeks of the campaign. He never strayed from the Party line and at the committee meetings his contributions were completely unimaginative and quite predictable whereas Harry's proposals and suggestions were mostly always different and original. No doubt that was to be expected because of his wide experience and long-time record of activity in the Labour Movement.

Harry was the Scottish correspondent for the *Daily Worker* during the 2nd World War and then Scottish editor, and he remained in the post till 1952. His reports covered the gamut, ranging from the crofters' land seizure at Knoydart to the unmasking of the 'kangaroo courts' inside Polish army camps in Scotland. It was Harry gave Alice Cullen, the Labour candidate, the nickname "Silent Alice". He knew that although she had been a Councillor for eleven years she had never spoken once at a meeting of Glasgow Corporation. 0ver the years he built up a wide circle of contacts inside the Labour Movement and was a kenspeckle figure on the conference ciruit, he became a doyen among industrial reporters. Being privy to inside information helped him pull off a few scoops but he was never selfish with knowledge, he shared it, and he assisted many a gentleman of the press over a difficult stile. Apart from his job with *The Daily Worker* he was Chairman of the Glasgow Branch of the N.U.J. and all in all he had access to most newspapers and the media in general. This was how Peter Kerrigan could get involved in issues that none of the other candidates knew anything about.

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[3] Any info? Finlay Hart makes no mention of this in his autobiographical sketch, see p72

So I was flabbergasted two weeks into the campaign when I got a telephone call from John Gollan through to the Gorbals' rooms telling me that he was sending up Malcolm McEwan to relieve Harry McShane from the job as Press Secretary for the election. John Gollan told me to tell Peter Kerrigan the situation but not to tell Harry. This I could not do. I immediately told Harry and then told Kerrigan. It should be said that I had absolutely no quarrel with Malcolm McEwan who was a very capable journalist and had been a feature writer with *The Daily Worker*.

That was my first but not my last experience of double-dealing within the party. It was also the beginning of my close relationship with Harry McShane, it lasted for over forty years. The next battles took place in the Glasgow Committee where we were to be regarded as 'deviationists'. But the election campaign in Gorbals was really outstanding.The Labour candidate was not at the races. With over a thousand activists from the Party and the Y.C.L. we really set the Gorbals alight. For a while it looked like Kerrigan could break the mould and be successful but we reckoned without the 'silent majority', including the Catholic vote. Even against that he got over 8000 votes, the best vote for a Communist candidate in Scotland.

The events leading up to my own resignation took place over a number of years but I think it really began with seeing the attitudes being adopted by the full-time officials on issues like housing, public activities and industrial policy. At first I believed it was local officials such as Bob McIlhone who formed campaigning activities like squatting, rent strikes and other strikes, only later did I find out different. In actual fact what we wanted was the party to get involved in all struggles whether official or unofficial. On one occasion we were accused of being adventurers because we accepted Les Forster's suggestion during a campaign that we should throw a few thousand leaflets out the top windows of Lewis's Store in Argyle Street.

In his book *No Mean Fighter* Harry mentions a few events that led to him leaving the Communist Party. He was against paid officials who did not like any discussion on the Party line and whatever had been laid down by the Central Committee. They tended to dictate policy and direct any action through official channels and more and more they frowned on small unofficial strikes. Also there were those who had left the Party for purely selfish motives, either to join the Labour Party or become a full-time official in a trades union. These ex-Communist Party members still seemed to be acceptable to the Party leaders, even although some went on to become MPs, even peers in the House of Lords. The C.P. leaders still regarded them as allies despite the fact that in thought and action they were real right-wingers.

Another issue that created uncertainty was housing. There was a waiting-list of nearly a hundred thousand for council housing. In order to spotlight the shortage people in unsanitary houses had started to withold their rents. While the Party full-time officials did not condemn the comrades who were assisting these people their support was lukewarm. Also at this period there were thousands of empty houses and premises in private hands. These were seen by their owners as assets whereas those of us involved in the struggle saw them as places to rehouse the homeless. This led to the squatters' movement which to begin with was entirely spontaneous but a few comrades like Les Forster and John Gold were to the fore. It is significant that the only leading Communist to get involved in helping with publicity and legal

aid where necessary was Harry McShane.

During this period there was another small issue when two leading party officials got posters printed saying they were Housing Candidates in the municipal election, but no mention was made of their party membership, nor that they were full time officials of the Communist Party. Harry regarded this as deception and the posters were destroyed but the malaise, in his opinion, had not been eradicated. It was part of the growing desire for respectability within the movement, instead of declaring your Communist principles and joining the workers in struggle.

Harry was well kent in the Scottish Offices through in Edinburgh, municipal affairs were his abiding interest and the housing question high on his agenda. His lust for a big story about housing came off in the year 1951 when he reported the agitation and strikes against the sale of council houses at Merrylee in Glasgow. By this time he had become completely disillusioned with the Communist Party and behind the scenes was having a running battle with its leaders. Even although he was still a Party member they removed him from his position at the *Daily Worker*. The same tactic was to be used much later against Peter Fryer when he was asked to leave the *Daily Worker* because of editorial suppression of his despatches from the Hungarian Revolution of 1956.

After he had left the C.P. the Scottish Socialist weekly, *Forward*, asked him to do a series of articles in 1953. Harry was to write one of his best stories when Billy Graham, the American evangelist, arrived at Glasgow's Kelvin Hall and his piece was headed 'There's no business like show business."

Harry was indeed the last of the Red Clydesiders. He never lost his belief in the Socialist cause and while he had offers to join other parties, ranging from the Labour Party to most of the left-wing parties, he remained suspicious of their rigidity and after his experiences in the Communist Party he had doubts about a 'vanguard'. He was no armchair philosopher either and it always gladdened his heart when the workers won a victory as a result of strike-action. In his time he had access to many establishment figures but he never used it for personal advantage, but he did use it to ensure that they listened to what the workers had to say, or else to arrange release or bail for somebody wrongly imprisoned. He was completely incorruptible. After leaving the Communist Party at sixty two years of age he returned to his trade as an enguneer in Harland & Wolfe and he really was quite content working with his hands.

His autobiography, *No Mean Fighter*, covered a period from his birth on May 1891 up to 1953, the year he left the Communist Party. Some mention was made of the years afterwards but it was only cursory. From 1953 to 1988, the year that he died, was perhaps the best years of his life and into his late eighties he was much in demand as a platform speaker, rousing audiences at the Free Trade Hall in Manchester, and the Albert Hall in London.

Party diehards were always at his meetings with very little to say except "Why did you leave the party?" His answer was straightforward, because the C.P. was no longer a revolutionary party, and the Soviet Union was not, nor ever had been, a Socialist country. Year in year out they kept asking the same question. It was so inane, ludicrous. When he was over 90 years of age and speaking to a packed meeting a fellow stood up and asked him the same old

chesnut. It was a meeting in Stratchclyde University organised by the Glasgow Labour History Society and the subject was the Russian revolution. This was thirty four years after he had left the Party. Harry's reply was instant "Why did you stay in?" The questioner was dumfounded.

His newspaper training never left him and he was just as meticulous preparing a duplicated news-sheet for the Socialist Workers' Federation as for anything else. There was one called *New Commune* and under Harry's guidance stories were published that others had not got and, for instance, a big splash was made with Lenin's last will and testament. Another issue was devoted to lengthy extracts from Kruschev's disclosures of life under Stalin. *New Commune* was restricted in size and out of it was born a new and bigger and better paper, *Socialist Revolt.* Harry here was in his element, writing, editing and encouraging others to put pen to paper.

Writing for the press was so different in those days. Word-processors, discs, tapes, recorders were not the tools of the trade, instead it was the pen, the pencil and the typewriter, and you were considered well equipped if you could do shorthand into a notebook. Harry could type and do a bit of shorthand but he always thought that style was the essence of good writing. Books on grammar and punctuation and litereary composition he found of great help. He was a respected member of the N.U.J., and on friendly terms with fellow Glasgwegian scribes such as Jack House, John Hossack and Cliff Hanley.

As a public speaker he had no flashy rhetoric, he was not an orator in the mould of Nye Bevan, Harry Pollitt or Arthur Horner but with a street corner he was a vintage soap-box man, or at Glasgow Green, Speakers' Corner, Hyde Park, almost always speaking without notes. Question time was his forte and few could match him in debate. After leaving the Communist Party he spoke regularly at open air meetings at Drury Street in the heart of Glasgow.

He did not require the Hungarian tragedy before resigning but when it happened he supported it immediately. In reply to the Soviety allegations about Fascists and the C.I.A. he said "When do you ever see Fascists setting up workers' councils?" Harry had turned to Marxist Humanism long before Dubcek called for Communism with a human face. While he remained in the C.P. for over thirty years he was never very influential within it, particularly with the new leaders who had attended the Lenin School in Moscow.

Many who left the Party following the Hungarian revolution of 1956 sought solace by joining the Labour Party. Some disappeared into the limbo of trades union officialdon. 0thers just stopped doing anything political at all. Harry McShane was made of sterner stuff. He donned his thinking cap and went back to reading all over again the early writings of Karl Marx when he was a young humanist, and then the older Marx who wrote *Capital* volumes 1 to 3.

Despite what happened in Russia after 1917 he never expressed regret at supporting the revolution in its infancy. Like his colleague of that time, John McLean, he saw it as a great uprising from below. Before he threw in his lot with the new emergent Communist Party of Great Britain he was already a confirmed Marxist, a revolutionary Socialist. Long before he left the Party he realised things had gone all wrong. The hopes engendered by the Russian Revolution were dashed and cruelly betrayed. How this came to pass he set about finding out, reading the lives and opinions of some of the early revolutionaries who had been there. They

had been sending out warning signals laced with predictions as to what was likely to happen inside the Soviet Union if the rot was not stopped. As well as being a thinker Harry was a practical man and along with the late Eric Heffer and other kindred spirits who had left the C.P. they formed an organisation called the Socialist Workers Federation, while launching a newspaper called *Socialist Revolt*..

The Socialist Workers Federation was not a political party. Those connected with it had no grandiose ambitions except spreading Socialist propaganda by word and mouth. For a while Harry was a regular contributor to *Forward*, the Socialist weekly, writing a series of articles. All his political life he relished the challenge of debate which for him was the water of life. 0pponents he never feared, taking the view that the bigger they are the harder they fall, and they do not come higher than Archbishop Winning, or Lord Boyle.

The memory of Adam Smith will survive quite well without any help from the Institute named after him by the far right. Their knowledge of the Kirkcaldy sage seems very slim and sometimes verges on the pathetic. At the Bi-centenary Conference organised by the Adam Smith Institute, among others on the platform were Lord Boyle, Education Minister for the Tory Government, and J. K. Galbraith from the U.S.A. Speaking from the body of the hall Harry pulled no punches and his verbal blows sent his opponents reeling. He quoted a letter from Adam Smith to Sir John Sinclair "I dislike all taxes that may effect the necessary expenses of the poor. They according to circumstances either oppress the people immediately, subject them, or are repaid with geat interest by the rich." Then he cited Smith's attitude to labour and labourers and commented "that if working men they would be put down by the authorities." This was a fervent plea for the memory of the real Adam Smith to jump out of its Tory straitjacket. It was a tour de force and Lord Boyle was hanging on the ropes. When he did reply he concentrated only on Harry McShane and revealed that here was the educator deficient in his knowledge of the famous philosopher. A professor from Japan referred to Harry's contribution "It takes a Scotsman to know a Scotsman."

In his lifetime he shared the platform with some of the greats of the socialist movement. He toured Scotland with John McLean and other members of 'the tramp trust', and also spoke with the legendary Tom Mann at the market town of Mansfield. In his later years he did solo spots all over the country. His friend, the late Bill McCulloch before he died could still recall vividly an evening in a pub at Kilburn listening to Harry on the irish question. 0n one occasion Sheila Rowbotham, the an socialist and feminist, was so moved after hearing him speak that she wrote a poem as a tribute to him. He was much sought after with invitations to speak to a variety of public gatherings and I remember him addressing the Glasgow Bar Association on the question of Marxism and Law, and he also spoke at the German-Goethe institute in Glasgow, and he took part in talks and debates at many universities in Scotland and England. When he spoke with Bernadette McAliskey (then Devlin) at the Woodside Halls in Glasgow the place was surrounded by hundreds of jeering 0rangemen, with hundreds of police to escort the audience in and out.

All this activity he relished with enthusiasm. When 0ld Father Time started to catch up with him he was in his 90s and his public appearances had to be severely curtailed.The last time

he spoke in public was at a May Day celebration at Glasgow Green when tribute was being paid the Calton Weavers martyrs on the 200 anniversary of their murder. The main speaker on the May Day platform that. day was Ron Todd of the TGWU who said it was an honour to speak on the same platform as Harry McShane. Elspeth King of the People's Palace presented him with a special medal that she had had produced in commeroration of the Calton Weavers.

Although he never sought any honours he did accept the Freedom of the City of Glasgow award, after some persuasion. It was presented to him by the Lord Provost in company with the Glasgow Cathedral minister and much to the annoyance of the latter the band struck up *I belong to Glasgow* instead of the National Anthem. When one looks at the Labour Lords and at those people who have used the Movement for personal advancement I think about Harry McShane. A few days before he died I asked him how he was fixed for money and he said "I'm fine, I've over forty pounds." Let that be his epitaph after eighty years a Marxist.

Endword

It was not without a great deal of persuasion that I decided to put my experiences into print, going back over a fifty year period in the social, industrial and political field. I am not a great writer, not even a writer at all, but it is time the voices of the footsloggers were heard rather than the generals. Like hundreds of other workers I never had the ambition nor desire to be any kind of leader. It was always exhilarating for me when the ordinary working class won even a small victory over the employing class, more so when there was an advance of democratic rights.

My philosophy has always been that the struggle to emancipate the people from the rotten and corrupt chains of the present system is greater than the personality or ambition of any leader, or any party, or indeed any government. I have the greatest hatred for a system that denies there is any such thing as society in the real sense of what that means; a system that denies responsibility for millions of unemployed people, that accepts no liability for a million homeless people, that discards school-leavers, forcing them onto the scrapheap without any means of support, that deprives old-age pensioners of more than £80 million by changing the method of assessment so that 11 million pensioners now have the lowest pensions in Europe.[1]. It is a system that shows absolutely no concern for the health of the people, no concern that dieases such as tuberculosis are once more back on the agenda, that practises the philosophy of greed and encourages the triumph of the powerful. Those responsible have squandered our oil and gas resources before selling them to their friends in the city created private monopolies in Telecommunications, Gas, Water and Electricity

These are the same Houses of Parliament that legalised the plundering of a quarter of the world's territories, colonized India, Australia, Canada, the West Indies and America. They enslaved millions of African people, took them in chains to their plantations in the American continent. Ethnic cleansing did not begin with Hitler, Stalin or in the former Yugoslavia, the British aristocracy and ruling class started it more than two hundreds ago - ask the Scottish, Irish and Welsh people. Not only did they steal whole countries and continents they now stand exposed as having sent children from Britain after the 1st World War[2] to Australia, New Zealand and Canada, both to work on farms as slave labour while at the same time trying to populate these colonies with 'good white' people.

The most damning hypocrisy of all came from the various religious orders, churches and organisations who participated in enslaving whole nations. They blessed the troops before they went abroad to plunder the world, then built their churches on the captured soil. Christian organisations were further entangled in schemes to steal these young children and the deceit they used cannot be allowed to be covered up. The same organisations wonder why people

[1] Figures from the early 1990s

[2] Not the 2nd World War as has been stated elsewhere.

have turned their backs on religion, why a variety of denominations and churches are closing down, why there is such a dearth of priests within the Roman Catholic church, why many of those who begin fail to complete their training.

After such damning exposure of religion down through the centuries one would think another way could be tried by people. What is wrong with the humanism of the early socialists, the syndicalists who preached cooperation rather than confrontation, those who sought truth rather than miracles. Along with religion, nationality and race have been used deliberately to divide and keep people apart.

Above all I despise the so-called Labour leaders who give credibility to a corrupt parliamentary system. This system only functions because the Loyal 0pposition participates, giving the cloak of respectability to reactionary laws that have set the Labour movement back by a hundred years or more.

I am a Marxist and was a member of the Communist Party for a number of years, and some reference will be made here to Russia. While I was educated at the various classes I attended after joining the Party, I was never happy about the continual worship of everything that emanated from there. I joined the Party through struggle, because I believed its members were involved in fighting for the working class, and I had difficulty in defending aspects of Russian policy. I did not visit Russia and never had the inclination to do so. But hundreds of thousands, maybe millions, of trade union delegates and party members did do so, and returned lavishing praise on its achievments. I wonder what they have to say at the present time? We became familiar with the following quotation of Lenin, how does it stand now in light of the collapse of the Soviet Union?

> Man's dearest possession is life, therefore you must so live as to feel no torturing regrets for years without purpose, so live that you can say all my life is dedicated to the liberation of mankind.

T/SCR/50/1/5/1

The Silence Of The Lambs

There has never been a time in working class history when the working class has been so vulnerable and so leader less. In a period when there is massive unemployment 5million in fact and not in "real terms" as the crooked figures that the Tories project keep churning out. When at least a million people are homeless with thousnds sleeping rough many of them former inmates in institutions, last week one of the unfortunates in that category had his legs amputated due to frost bite. we now have tuberculosis back on the agenda. Where are our leaders?

Where is this mighty trade union movement? look at them all from that useless piece of flab Norman Willis of the T.U.C.who was more concerned about losing his seat on Neddy the phony Tory talking shop that Lamont abolished than the fact that the affiliated membership of the T.U.C has lossed over three million in the last two years. Surely the biggest indictment of all that he has remained silent along with the Lairds and the Airlies of the engineers when the very basic wages and conditions are being undermined. they stand by when they know that child labour is being used in many factories, and woman have to accept slave wages, then the Tories make it legal and abolish not only the Low Pay Unit and Wages Councils.

Is it not sicking the so called socialist trade union leaders can sign sweetheart deals with no strike clauses and turn a blind eye to overtime being the order of the day in a period of mass unemployment. Are these stupid opportunist garbage not aware that the legislation that has been abolished by the Tories was gained not by the pathetic parliementarians but the struggle of the rank and file and pioneers who built the Labour movement.

As for "Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition" would not the George Lansburys even the Nye Bevans turn in their grave when they see the kind of place seekers that grace the Labour benches. We have the leader of the opposition himself John Smith Q.C. who defined "Socialism as defending individualism"in a recent speech. Then we have Gordon Brown the "Shadow Chancellor"who really believes that he can run capitalism better than the Tories, not that it would be difficult with the present bunch, has he never heard of Ramsey McDonald, Harold Wilson and of course James Callaghan looked what happened to them. It is not a fact that the purpose of creating the Labour Party was to abolish capitalism not to save it and one thing is for sure it was never intended that the workers should make sacrifices to defend a system that robbs them from the cradle to the grave Has the time not long gone, when the Torys having sold the family silver to their friends in the City of London at throw away prices and with hundred millions of pounds given as inducements.Now they are turning their greedy eyes to the huge pension funds held by the railway unions and the National Union of Mineworkers having allowed British Telecom to use the pension funds to pad the redundancy payments made to thousands of workers that they dismissed after it was privatised. It is not good enough for Labour M.Ps. to say well we voted against these bills in the opinion of the ordinary worker what we are talking about is legalised theft and they are giving it the cloak of respectability by playing the parliementary game.

[illegible] for Willie McIlvenn[illegible]

T/SOR/50/1/5/1

The Scandal of the Burrel Collection.

For over five years behind the scenes the famous collection has been threatened by serious water leaks from the unique stainless steel roof that is a feature of the widely acclaimed building. Now Chris Burlow the city architect, and one time director of infamous Glasgow's Glasgow during 1990 year of culture,has broken his silence and admitted they have been trying for years to contact Barry Gasson the original architect of the Burrell building. Already they have had to remove most of sculptures from the vicinity of the damage but not before a famous Rodin was effected. The curator staff are concerned in case corrosiion maybe found in others, the architects dept. has set aside £100.000 to meet the cost, this maybe well short of the final cost.Messrs Taylor, Woodrow the main contractors and generous donators to the Tory party deny responsibility for the problem that has been on-going since 1988.

However have no fear that outstanding defender of the interests of the Glasgow proletariat Councillor Tommy Dingwall convenor of the Arts and Culture committee threatened a journalist who questioned him on the subject "with dire consequences and said whoever is providing you with this information will answer for this, now do not call here again.

In the words of his boozing pal councillor Mutter"Ill do it my way".

T/SOR/50/1/5/1

ee Did Maggie Iver Steal A Street

In the 1930s as a youg schoolboy along with a few other boys from Bernard Street in Bridgeton we started to attend a gyminasium situated in Sarecen Head Lane up from the Sarey Heid pub.It was run by a Dr. Cossar a tall grey haired man who wore a navel cap with a navy blue jersey. He belonged to a religous group whose main function seemed to be finding boys prepared to immigrate to countries in the then British Empire like Canada, New Zealand and Australia to work on farms.Dr Cossar was a very strict man and when we sometimes laughed and jostled each other when we were asked to join in prayers or sing hymns, he would use a large belt across your legs.I suppose we could have got the same facilities nearer home but most of the churches that had these facilities were looking to you to join the B.Bs. or the Scouts.but Iam afraid the disipline and regimentation of these organisations never appealed to me.The only question Dr Cossar ever asked before you gained admission to his gyminasium was, are you a good protestant? even although I went to a Catholic school in Bridgeton as my mother was a Protestant I had no difficulty saying yes. However when he started to pester us to sign up for immigration to Canada it was a different story.

Since then I have learned that he was only one of hundreds of religous zealots and organisations that used their sports and other facilities which were no-existent in areas like Bridgeton to attract and entice young boys from poor homes to immigrate. One of the leaders in this mass exodus of children at this period Dr, Barnardo followed by all the main protestant religions from the Church of Englands Waifs and Strays Society to the Salvation Army, then right through the Roman Catholic Church its self. All in the name of religion, without in most cases the parents consent or even knowledge.It was slave labour in a massive scale and all in the cause of populating the great British Empire from Canada, Africa,Australia and New Zealand. It started as far back in 1618 when the first children were sent to Richmond in America and it continued until 1967 and in excess of 150.000 children were sent to every corner of the